

Boy Scouts

on the
Columbia River
or
Adventures
in a
Motor Boat





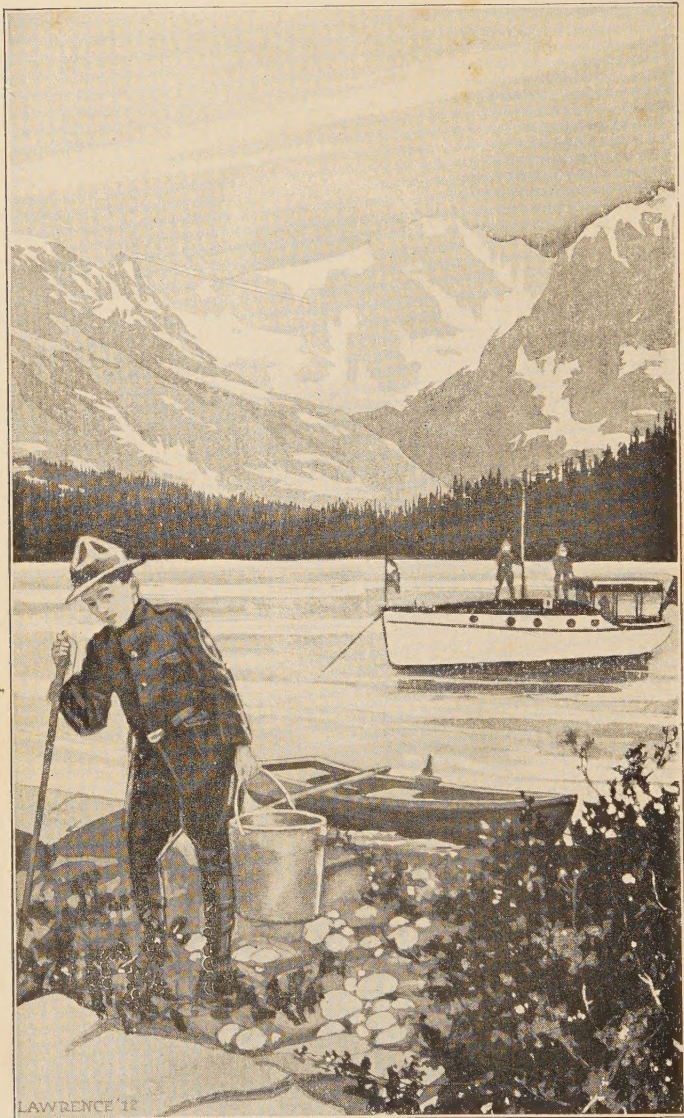
Paul -
From
Uncle Royal -





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“Look at this! Here we are on the Columbia river below the Kootenay branch - all mountains and forests clear to the Fraser river, and that must be two hundred miles.” [Page 83]

The Boy Scouts on the Columbia River.

BOY SCOUTS IN A MOTOR BOAT

OR

*ADVENTURES ON THE
COLUMBIA RIVER*

By

G. HARVEY RALPHSON

Author of BOY SCOUTS IN AN AIRSHIP
BOY SCOUTS IN A SUBMARINE
BOY SCOUTS ON A MOTOR CYCLE
BOY SCOUTS IN MEXICO



Chicago

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER.	PAGE.
I. THE LURE OF HIDDEN GOLD.....	7
II. STRANGE HAPPENINGS IN THE NIGHT.....	23
III. A TELL-TALE ALARM CLOCK.....	40
IV. THE BLACK BEAR AND THE WOLF.....	55
V. AKBAR AND SAXBY APPEAR.....	69
VI. A BRISK BATTLE SOON OVER.....	83
VII. THE BLACK BEAR TAKES A DROP.....	99
VIII. A BOY SCOUT POSTOFFICE.....	114
IX. THE LIGHTS IN THE SKY.....	130
X. AN EAGLE TO THE RESCUE.....	145
XI. THE BLACK BEAR SCENTS A PROWLER.....	159
XII. AKBAR PRESENTS HIMSELF.....	175
XIII. JACK TAKES A COLD BATH.....	191
XIV. THE QUEST OF THE SKY MAN.....	206
XV. A BLACK BEAR IN A CAGE.....	219
XVI. THE LAST OF TWO VILLAINS.....	229
XVII. RIPE FOR ADVENTURES IN THE AIR.....	239



Boy Scouts in a Motor Boat;

or

Adventures on the Columbia River

CHAPTER I.

THE LURE OF HIDDEN GOLD.

“And so this searcher for the Pirate’s Treasure came to the mysterious island, after many days, and encircled it in a boat until he came to a path made of flat rocks, set at regular intervals in the soil. With hope beating high in his breast, he followed this path to the end, and there came to a level space where no vegetation grew.

“Here he began to dig, for he reasoned that the absence of vegetation in that fertile spot indicated that barren earth from the bottom of some deep excavation had been brought to the surface. After two hours of heavy work with a spade, the blade of the implement rang sharply against what seemed to be a metal surface.

“Further digging revealed an iron chest,

about four feet in size each way, and so heavy that the resolute searcher, even with his great strength, could not budge it the breadth of a hair. Here, undoubtedly, was the treasure he had crossed a continent and an ocean to find.

“Finding himself unable to drag the chest out of the grave it had dwelt in so long, the searcher next endeavored to loosen the strong iron bands which held the cover down. Once under that metal plate, his arms would be up to the shoulders in pieces of eight and precious stones. It was an alluring prospect, and right manfully did the anxious man strive with the iron strips which guarded the wealth within.

“But, tug and strain as he would, the fastenings resisted all his efforts. The bars which crossed the top were cunningly carried to the inside through tight-fitting grooves and there fastened. After all his weary journey, after all his cruel privations, after really coming to the Pirate’s Treasure at last, he found himself as helpless to gain possession of it, even to touch it, as if it had been stored in a bank-vault guarded by a time-lock.

“And so, after trying in vain until darkness fell to discover some secret spring by means of which the lid of the chest might be lifted, the baffled searcher for the Pirate’s Gold restored

the loose earth to the excavation, smoothed it down as it had been on his arrival, and returned with an empty purse and a heavy heart to his native country.

“From that day forth he was known throughout all the countryside as a gold-mad man. It was believed that his incessant and unsuccessful search for the Pirate’s Gold had unsettled his brain. Although he could have led a company to the exact spot where the treasure chest was hidden in the rocky soil of the mysterious island, no one would give either credence to his tale or time or money to the enterprise, and so he died a discredited man, wanting the barest necessities of life.”

Frank Shaw, the reader, tossed the newspaper aside and arose to his feet with a yawn which ended in a long, satisfying grunt.

The four boys sitting in the glow of an open grate fire, in the handsome club-room of the Black Bear Patrol, in the City of New York, looked their chum over with varying expressions on their faces. There was a smile in the eyes of Ned Nestor which proclaimed misbelief in the story of buried treasure which had just been read.

Jack Bosworth, at the top of whose palatial home the Boy Scout club-room was situated, turned inquiring eyes toward Nestor, as if

waiting for a verdict from him, while Harry Stevens frowned steadily at the fire. On one face, however, there was a look of entire belief, a look bordering on enthusiasm. Jimmie McGraw, the youngest of the five boys assembled there, lost no time in expressing his opinion of the tale which Frank Shaw had just finished reading.

“Gee!” he cried, springing to his feet. “I wish I’d ‘a’ been that feller! If I couldn’t ‘a’ got away with the stuff I’d ‘a’ been sittin’ there yet.”

“All Jimmie’s hopes for future wealth are based on the finding of a pirate’s pot of gold,” laughed Harry Stevens. “He goes to sleep with a dream book under his pillow every night of his life, hoping a vision will show him the way, during the dark hours, to a ton or so of pieces of eight and a peck of diamonds. Of course round, hard, red American gold wouldn’t answer! The treasure must be in old Spanish pieces of eight, whatever they are—or were!”

“Anyway,” Jimmie broke in, “you’ve got to show me! Where does all the gold go to? There’s plenty of it hidden out of sight. I’ll bet there’s gold hidden right under the good old Bowery!”

Jimmie, who had been a Bowery newsboy

before attaching himself to the adventurous spirits of the Black Bear Patrol, arose, thrust his hands deep into his pockets, and walked slowly about the room, looking at the weapons and trophies and holding up his chin as if he considered his argument unanswerable.

It was a handsome apartment, and had long been dedicated exclusively to the use of the Boy Scouts of the Black Bear Patrol. The walls were hung with guns, automatic revolvers, paddles, fishing outfits, bows, arrows, foils, boxing-gloves, and such trophies as the Boy Scouts had brought from river and forest.

Above the door was a large shield, from the center of which a huge black bear lifted an inquisitive nose. Small duplicates of this shield constituted the badges of the Black Bear Patrol. The boys were proud of their badge, especially as the Black Bear Patrol was universally acknowledged to be the crack Patrol of New York.

The members of this Patrol were all sons of very wealthy parents. Mr. Shaw, the father of Frank, was owner and editor of one of the most influential newspapers in the city, the *Daily Planet*. Jack Bosworth's father was a famous corporation lawyer. The father of Harry Stevens was at the head of a great automobile concern. The parents of the other

members, with whom this story has no concern, were equally prominent in the business and social circles of the big city.

Ned Nestor and Jimmie McGraw, present in the Black Bear club-room on this night, were members of the Wolf Patrol, also of New York City, but had long been associated with the Black Bears. Nestor was principally employed in the Secret Service of the United States Government, while Jimmie, originally a street waif, was his constant companion in his adventurous undertakings, as were also some of the members of the Black Bear Patrol.

Members of the latter Patrol had accompanied Ned Nestor to Mexico in the interest of the Secret Service, to the Panama Canal Zone, to the Philippines, and to the Great Northwest. Nestor was hardly more than eighteen, much too young for regular enlistment in the Secret Service arm of the Government, yet he was, as has been said, often employed by the Government, frequently working directly under the orders of the Secretary of War, or those of the Secretary of State.

Those who have followed the Boy Scouts to Mexico, to the Canal Zone, to the Philippines and Japan, and to the Great Northwest in

previous volumes of this series* will readily understand the nature of Ned Nestor's employment without repetition here.

On this early May night, bright but cold for that season of the year, the five boys were discussing a vacation trip which had long been planned. On leaving the Northwest, where their efforts had resulted in the bringing to punishment of numerous forest "fire-bugs," the boys had promised themselves a return trip to that wonderful country under conditions more suited to leisure and to forest and river sports.

Frank Shaw had, on this night, interrupted the discussion with his tale of Pirate Gold, and had for a time switched the conversation in that direction. He had found the story in the morning issue of his father's newspaper, and, as will be seen later, had a secret motive in introducing it at this time. Jimmie McGraw, strolling about the club-room with his hands in his trousers pockets, his mind overflowing with the enthusiasm of the small boy for the pirate tale, was apparently no more of an enthusiast on the subject of buried gold than the son of the famous editor seemed to be.

"Boy Scouts in Mexico; or, On Guard With Uncle Sam."

"Boy Scouts in the Canal Zone; or, The Plot Against Uncle Sam."

"Boy Scouts in the Philippines; or, The Key to the Treaty Box."

"Boy Scouts in the Northwest; or, Fighting Forest Fires."

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“There’s more gold been wasted in hunting hidden treasures than has ever been brought to light by the searchers,” Jack Bosworth said, presently. “It seems to me that the old-time pirates knew what to do with their ill-gotten wealth.”

“Of course they did!” Jimmie exclaimed. “They buried it. They didn’t spend it, for they just took what they wanted. Say, but wouldn’t it be about right for us to dig up a bushel of pieces of eight? Suppose we take our vacation where there is a chance of finding treasure?”

For a moment no one replied to the suggestion, and then Frank Shaw came to Jimmie’s assistance.

“There’s a good many places where gold is buried, if you believe the newspapers,” he said. “Why, look here,” he went on, taking a newspaper clipping from a pocket, “this writer claims that there’s a pirate treasure buried away up the Columbia river, some distance below the boundary line.”

Nestor leaned back in his chair and laughed heartily.

“So that’s the idea!” he exclaimed. “You’re insisting on the Columbia river trip because you think there’s gold hidden up there! I’ve been wondering why you advocated that trip

so strenuously, why you brought up the subject of hidden gold just now!"

"Well," Frank said, blushing a bit, as one caught in a sly move, "I'll admit that you have named one reason for my choice of the Columbia. But, aside from the possibility of finding buried gold, there's no river trip in the world that can equal it. A summer spent in a motor boat on the Columbia river would be about the height of human enjoyment, it seems to me."

"It sure is a glorious old stream," Jack Bosworth said. "I've been looking it up since this vacation journey has been under discussion. We can get all kinds of wild game and wild thrills, too, and at the same time be only a short distance from a railroad. There's probably about as much buried gold up there as there is under the floor of this room, but I'm for the Columbia, for all that."

"Pirate treasure on the Columbia!" smiled Ned Nestor. "That is a new one on me. Where did you get that idea, Frank?" he added.

"I never said there was pirate treasure along the Columbia," Frank hastened to say, turning to Jimmie McGraw's eager face for support. "What I said was that, aside from the possibility of finding buried gold, there's no river trip in the world to equal it."

"I smell a gold story in even that sentence," said Jack Bosworth. "What is it, my brave boy? Where have you located this wonderful treasure on the Columbia?"

"I haven't said anything about locating a wonderful treasure on the Columbia," insisted Frank. "But, all the same there may be one there. A treasure brought over from India away back in 1717, or about that time."

"Tell 'em about it!" urged Jimmie McGraw, who, it was evident, had already been taken into the confidence of the Columbia river enthusiast.

"I guess they've all read of it," Frank continued. "Very early in the eighteenth century, as the story goes, great stores of gold were brought across the Pacific and hidden in the new land. Ever since the beginning of history India, China, Japan, the whole Great East, in fact, have been hiding gold away. One writer says that gold sinks into the caverns of the East as water sinks into the sands of the desert, never to make its appearance again."

"It goes somewhere, all right," admitted Harry Stevens, from an easy position on a great red divan. "Think of all the gold that has been brought out of the earth since the beginning of the world! Why, there isn't one-

tenth of it in sight now. It is hidden away somewhere, believe me."

"Yes, it goes somewhere," Frank went on, encouraged by the support of his chum. "Thomas J. Hurley, of the American Institute of Mining Engineers, says in a recent work that every year a great yellow stream flows into the East, a never-ending stream that never turns back. He says that the work of gold-absorption in Asia has been going on for thousands of years, and will never cease. I've been reading it up," he added, as Nestor turned a smiling face in his direction.

"It is interesting, anyway," Nestor said.

"In the Regency of Bombay alone," Frank continued, referring to a newspaper clipping in his hand, "\$60,000,000 in gold are said to be concealed. Every class of Hindus is given to gold hoarding. Even the gods of India whistle for it through the lips of their priests. It comes pouring into the sacred temples from all directions, and finds shelter in subterranean passages to which only priests have entrance."

"I hope you're not going to run the Columbia river under one of the temples of India," laughed Jack, rather nervously, "and so impregnate its water with gold. Come back to the trip we've been talking about."

"I was asked to account for the alleged

treasure along the Columbia," Frank said, rather angrily, "and I'm getting at it as fast as I can. The treasure I am speaking of came across the Pacific in the early years of the eighteenth century—came from the sacred temples of India."

"Ever think of turning your genius to fiction?" asked Jack, uneasily.

"Never you mind," Frank continued, with a grin. "This is history. In India at the time I speak of a succession of nominal sovereigns, sunk in ignorance and debauchery, ruled from sequestered palaces, intent only on their own pleasures. It is only natural, then, that Viceroy formed their provinces into independent states, while Hindu and Mohammedan adventurers carved out kingdoms with the sword."

"That's history, sure enough!" Harry Stevens interrupted.

"Of course it is," Frank said, in rather an injured tone of voice. "Well, these self-made Viceroy and Kings and Princes were robbers, and did not respect the rights of those who had accumulated gold, so one Akbar, named for the monarch of the same name, doubtless, got millions and millions of dollars worth of the yellow stuff together, loaded it on board the strongest vessel he could find, and secretly set

out for the new world, where he hoped to retain his wealth in peace."

"Where did you get the fable?" asked Jack, who had been moving restlessly about the room during the recital. "Who told it to you, and where did your informant get his information?" added the boy, speaking earnestly.

Never you mind," laughed Frank. "I suppose you're already wise to the hidden gold, and want to get there first! Well, the gold was, according to the tale, brought over here in 1720, or thereabouts. The early explorers found strange buildings along the Columbia. Captain Gray, who explored the stream in the ship *Columbia*, in the interest of the Hudson Bay Company, in 1792, told of strange building materials in ruins in the great canyons."

"It is all rot!" exclaimed Jack impatiently. "Where did he land this wonderful cargo of gold?"

"It is said that he took it up the Columbia river, deeper then than now, and built his temples somewhere on the west bank, between the meeting of the Okanogan river with the Columbia and the junction of the Spokane river with the latter. At any rate, there are said to be ruins of old building in the canyons of that district."

"Does your father know of this inventive talent in his son?" laughed Jack.

"That's all about buried gold," Frank went on, "but I've got nine thousand reasons to give you why we ought to choose the Columbia for our vacation trip."

"Never mind the nine thousand reasons," Ned said, "for we know——"

The tipping of a large screen at the back of the room here attracted the attention of the boys. The screen seemed to be steadied by an unseen hand for an instant, and then fell quite to the floor and a door closed sharply behind a fleeing figure.

"That's Akbar III., as we call him," Jack cried, as the figure disappeared. "He came from India with father a year ago. He's been standing there listening!"

"Is he really an East Indian?" asked Ned, carelessly.

"Sure he is," replied Jack. "If you leave it to him, he's a descendant of the original Akbar—Akbar son of Humayun, son of Baber! Father took a notion to him and brought him from India. Funny he should have been listening there while Frank was telling us about the old, old Akbar! I'll bet he's grinning now at the very idea of that old

reprobate hiding gold and building temples in the Columbia river country!"

"You'd lose!" cried Jimmie. "What do you suppose he dropped his caste prejudices for an' come over here? What was he listening for? Huh! He'll be on a hot foot to the Columbia river before morning!"

"He's no such fool!" scorned Jack, who pretended to regard Frank's story as pure fiction.

"You'll see!" said Jimmie. "Why, that's what he came here for!"

"This grows interesting," Ned observed, looking thoughtfully into the flames.

"You know it!" cried Frank. "When do we start?"

"Oh, well!" laughed Ned, "If you boys are set on hunting for hidden gold as well as taking a motor boat trip, we may as well get started as soon as possible. Only don't count too much on ruined temples and buried treasure in the valley of the Columbia."

The other boys joined hands and circled about the room, uttering the calls of the Black Bear and Wolf Patrols. They had long been reckoning on this trip, and now it seemed very near to them.

"While you boys are looking for ruined temples and gold," laughed Jack Bosworth,

breaking away from the circle, "I'll be looking for hidden treasures in the soil. Why, that country is richer than mud! There's where all the fine apples and grains will come from in future years. There is gold in the earth of the Columbia river country," he added, "but you've got to get it out with agricultural implements."

"You just wait!" Frank said. "I'll convince you!"

In a short time the boys parted for the night, and the house was still.

CHAPTER II.

STRANGE HAPPENINGS IN THE NIGHT.

Jack Bosworth did not fall asleep immediately on retiring, as was his usual habit. His mind was excited over the events of the evening. He was enthusiastic over the proposed river trip, and, besides, his mind dwelt with peculiar tenacity on the appearance in the club-room of the East Indian. That the fellow had overheard the story Frank had told he could not doubt.

Would Akbar, as had been suggested, set out at once in quest of the treasure? Was it a fact that he had come to America with the sole view of finding this gold? And where had Frank heard this tale? How generally was it known? These were the questions which demanded attention, and which he could not answer.

"I'll find out to-morrow," he thought, "what Frank means by telling such a yarn, and where he received his information."

When he tried to sleep temples with fallen walls all overgrown with vines and moss moved in procession through his brain. A dozen times he heard the sweep of waves against project-

ing walls, and at last he gave up the notion of sleeping at all that night. For reasons of his own, he did not care to have Frank so eager over this temple matter, and this troubled his dreams, also!

While he lay there, wide-eyed, the sound of a closing door in the lower part of the house reached his ears. Wondering who it might be that was stirring at that hour, he arose, clothed only in his pajamas, and sat down by a window facing the street, the sash of which was lifted a foot or more.

It was now after midnight, and the moon was lifting over the residence district to the east. There were no loiterers in the street, and the hum of the city came faintly to his ears. The house stands on the north side of a fine residence street, and there was a line of shadows along the pavement on that side, the opposite walk being bright under the rays of the moon. The daub of shadows in which the porches and areas on the north side lay narrowed as the moon rose higher.

As the boy sat looking out, and listening, too, for some further sound within the house, a figure appeared on the porch below. There had been no indications of the opening or closing of the great entrance door, and the figure below had not come from the street, so the boy rea-

soned that it must have left the interior cautiously, slyly!

Why? Jack asked. Why had he left the house so silently? Was he a member of the household, out for a ramble in the city at night? Was he a stranger, in the residence during the dark hours for no honest purpose? Jack resolved to remain quiet in the hope of finding answers to these questions.

The moon, lifting higher and pushing the shadows down as it shone more freely on the front of the house, at length brought the head of the man below into view, leaving the shoulders and body dimly seen, as if the fellow were wading in black water up to his neck. Jack had no difficulty in recognizing the face as that of Akbar! But what was he doing there at that time of night?

“Now I wonder,” thought the boy, “if Akbar is prowling around thinking of that hidden gold? And I wonder if he is making arrangements to go in search of it? If he is, he’s a long way ahead of the—the Boy Scout expedition,” with which odd conclusion the lad moved about so as to get a better view of what went on below.

The East Indian stood like a graven image on the porch for a moment, then moved slowly down the steps. He bent his head this way

and that, and seemed to be watching for some one. Whenever a footstep sounded in a nearby street he advanced a pace and then drew back again when the sound passed on.

Five minutes passed, and then a figure turned a corner two houses to the west and approached the spot where Akbar stood. The two faced each other silently for a moment, and Jack noted the strange similarity of figure and feature. Then they withdrew to the shelter of the deep doorway. By leaning far out of his window, at the risk of tumbling into the area below, and also at the risk of discovery, Jack now and then caught sight of a hand extended as if in impassioned gesture, but not a word of what was being said could he hear.

Determined to learn something of what was going on, if such a thing were possible, Jack passed out of his suite, after hastily drawing on his trousers and slippers, and stood for an instant at the head of the great staircase leading to the first floor of the house. It was his intention to make his way to the lower hall and station himself on the inner side of the door beyond which this secret conversation was going on.

From that position it might be possible to learn something of the business being conducted there at that unusual hour, but the prin-

cipal reason for choosing that point was that he might from there follow the movements of the East Indian if he re-entered the house. Jack was too honorable a boy to be given to the listening habit, but under the circumstances he considered that he was fully justified in learning all that he could, and in any way he could, of the stealthy interview which was taking place just outside the big door.

The boy found the lights in the corridor burning unusually low when he closed his own door and stood listening at the head of the staircase. All was still in the house, not even the tumblings of a restless sleeper being heard.

As Jack stepped downward he noticed that there was a dim glow on the transom of the den, a room directly across the corridor from his own suite. This was unusual, and he paused an instant to investigate. A straight line drawn from his own door to that of the den—a room used exclusively by his father—would have passed across the entrance to the staircase, so the boy had only a few steps to take to reach the lighted transom.

Standing at the door, his hand on the knob, he heard noises inside which sounded like the opening and closing of drawers and the rattling of papers. The boy was startled by what

he heard, for that room was his father's exclusive retiring place, and he knew that his father would not be working there at that hour and in that dim light. For all he knew Akbar might have admitted some thief to the house.

It was an unnerving proposition, these queer doings in that ordinarily quiet house, and Jack was, perhaps, unduly excited at the thought of facing burglars there; at any rate, the hand on the door knob trembled slightly and rattled the metals of the lock. Then, quick, almost, as a flash, came a voice from the inside.

"Who is there?" the question came, in a low tone.

For an instant Jack made no answer. That certainly was not his father's voice. It was equally certain that no one else had a right in that room at that time. Just what to do the boy could not instantly decide. While he waited he heard the front door close softly. Then hurried steps were heard in the lower corridor. That would be Akbar coming in from the strange conference on the porch.

Jack was now more puzzled than ever as to what course to pursue. If he entered the den he might be attacked and Akbar, alarmed by the noise of conflict, would be able to either leave the house or retire to his own room, thus baffling the intended surveillance made neces-

sary by the occurrences of the time. If he left the den to its fate and followed Akbar, great damage might be wrought there. Jack knew that money was never kept in the den, but he knew, also, that papers of great value were often left there.

Realizing at last that he could not watch both points of suspicion, Jack finally decided to turn his attention to the preservation of his father's papers and let Akbar's case go until another time. He could not believe, as Jimmie had hinted, that the East Indian would really set out immediately in quest of the buried gold, if he set out at all, and resolved to have it out with him the next morning. He wished devoutly for assistance, but was too plucky to call out for help.

He pushed on the door, but it did not open far. Some heavy hand was pressing steadily against it, for it swung to when the force he was using ceased. There was a silent struggle as the door was pushed back and forth, and then the voice which had spoken before asked:

"Who is it?"

"Jack," panted the boy, pushing against the door with all his strength. "What are you doing in here in the night?" he added, thrusting a foot into the narrow opening so that the door might not be wholly closed again.

Then, much to his astonishment and momentary terror, the pressure on the back of the door was removed and a hand and arm reached out into the corridor and seized him by the shoulder.

“Come in here, quick, and close the door,” the voice said.

Jack obeyed instantly; in fact, he was practically pulled into the dim room, which seemed in great disorder. In the faint light he recognized the man who had spoken as Homer Saxby, chauffeur and man of all work about the house and garage. The man had long been in the employ of the attorney, and had often accompanied Mr. Bosworth on his journeys abroad — acting as valet occasionally — but there had never been any friendship between him and Jack.

Saxby was short and muscular, with a bull-like neck and small, sharp black eyes. He was almost as dusky and as dark of hair as Akbar, the East Indian, and was almost as well versed in the languages, dialects and customs of the Far East. He was of middle age, and seemed to have no intimate friends or familiars of any sort, or even acquaintances, outside of the family he served.

“What are you doing here?” Jack asked, his eyes flashing suspicion.

Saxby did not answer the question immediately. Instead he asked one.

"Is there someone moving about out there?"

"Yes," replied Jack. "Akbar is prowling about the house. I heard a noise and came out to see what it meant."

Saxby now closed the door gently and turned on the lights, revealing drawers emptied of their contents and lying overturned on the rug. Papers were scattered about in all directions, and a small safe, rarely left unlocked, was wide open, its contents sifting out on the floor.

"I should think he was prowling about the house," Saxby said. "Look at this room! I saw him leaving it not long ago and came in to see what was up. I was trying to straighten it up a bit when I heard your hand on the door."

Jack gazed about the apartment in wonder and dismay.

"There'll be doings when father knows of this," he said. "Perhaps I'd better go and get him out of bed."

"Your father is out of the city," Saxby replied, stooping over to rescue a sheaf of papers from the floor. "I went to the Grand Central station with him early in the evening, and remained out until half an hour ago. Then, when I came home, I went to the garage with

the machine and so came up the back stairway."

Saxby ceased speaking and lifted his hand in warning. There were footfalls in the corridor outside.

"You may as well open the door," Jack suggested. "Anyone out there would know the room was occupied by the lights being on. It may be Akbar. I saw him talking with some one down on the porch, and he may have brought the fellow into the house, so we'd better be careful, as there may be two of them."

"I don't believe it is Akbar," Saxby whispered. "He wouldn't dare come back here after making all this muss."

"How do you know he made it?" Jack asked, regarding Saxby suspiciously. "He came into the house, I'm sure, and he wouldn't come boldly here if he had been guilty of searching this room."

"Perhaps he doesn't know that his intrusion has been discovered," suggested Saxby. "He didn't see me when I came up."

"And the den all lit up in this way!" Jack said. "If he did it, he must know that the outrage is now known, for the room isn't as he left it, if he left it at all tonight. Open the door and we'll see how he acts."

The knob was turned, but the door did not

open. Jack walked over to it and found it locked. He looked accusingly at Saxby and was about to speak when the sound of a heavy article being dragged over the floor came from outside.

“What’s going on here tonight?” Jack demanded, facing Saxby with suspicious eyes. “Why is the door locked? What is that noise in the hall? Go to the ’phone and call the police. Use father’s private one. there on the window-seat.”

“That’s out of order,” said Saxby. “Keep out of range of that transom!” he added, as Jack moved toward the door. “I think I know what that noise out there means.”

Almost involuntarily Jack stepped aside and Saxby did the same. They were not a second too soon, for something whizzed past the boy’s head and struck on the opposite wall. Quick as a flash Saxby leaned forward and seized it, keeping out of range of the transom as he did so.

“What do you think of that?” Jack asked. “What is it?” he added, as Saxby bent over the object. “It might be one of Cupid’s darts!”

“It is a dart, all right,” replied Saxby, his face turning paler. “But anything but a Cupid dart! It’s poisoned! A scratch from that

point means death! Now you can see why I locked the door. I've met with such weapons before."

Then, for the first time in its very exclusive existence, pistol shots sounded in the Bosworth house. For the first time in its history the acrid fumes of powder smoke drifted down its wide corridors. Saxby had fired at the transom, from which the dart had come, and the glass rattled down on the floor.

It seemed to the boy as if he had suddenly been transferred from the eminently respectable house to some savage land where force and cunning were the prime factors in human life. It was all bizarre, unaccountable, unreal.

Then there was a fall outside, and in a moment excited voices were heard in the lower part of the house, and in the servants' quarters above. Alarmed by the pistol shots, the occupants of the place were stirring. Presently there came a sharp ring of a telephone bell.

Saxby seemed reluctant to approach or open the locked door, but Jack hastened there and turned the key and the knob. Something standing in the corridor and leaning against the door toppled forward and swayed into the room.

"He brought a step-ladder from somewhere," Jack said, lifting the article out of the way. "That's what he dragged over the floor,

and that's what he stood on while throwing the dart."

"Who's up there?" came the voice of the housekeeper from below.

"Jack," was the reply. "What's coming off here?"

"Oh, I don't know," came the voice of the housekeeper. "There's been shooting, and some one may have been killed, and I can't get central."

"Who was it that just passed down the stairs?" asked Saxby, now standing at the head of the staircase by Jack's side.

"I don't know," answered the housekeeper. "I heard the door bang, and that's all I know about it. I wish you'd come down and see if you can get central. We must have the police here immediately."

"Is that wise?" whispered Saxby in Jack's ear.

Jack thought for an instant and decided that it would hardly answer to bring the police into the house in the absence of his father. The newspapers would be sure to get the story, and the home of the attorney would be besieged by reporters for days. That would never answer.

"Wait," the boy said, descending the stairs and addressing the rattled housekeeper, "and I'll see what I can do. There's no one hurt,

and nothing wrong, except that the den has been turned upside down and someone has been trying to kill either Saxby or myself."

"That's enough, goodness knows!" cried the housekeeper, wringing her hands. "And I heard shooting and breaking glass! Why don't you hurry and get the police here?"

"All right," Jack replied, "I'll attend to that and you'd better go and waken Akbar and some of the others. We ought to have the house searched, for the man who rifled the den may be still here."

Saxby opened his lips to say that Akbar would not be found in his room, or even in the house, but Jack stopped him.

"Let her go," he said. "it will give her something to do, and so occupy her mind, and at the same time let us know if he really has gone. There is no knowing if it was Akbar who climbed up to the transom."

"Have your own way," growled Saxby, "but, if it wasn't him, what was he prowling about the house for? Tell me that."

"Why, you were prowling about the house, too," Jack suggested.

Instead of calling the police, Jack called Ned Nestor's number and asked him to come over at once. Saxby looked relieved when Jack

concluded the short conversation and hung up the receiver.

“One of your Boy Scouts,” Saxby said, with a half sneer. “Well, that may be better than calling the public police into the house. This lad, this Ned Nestor, think’s he’s a little brass god on red wheels when it comes to solving mysteries, eh?” he added.

Before Jack could make a fitting reply to the uncalled for sneer, the frightened housekeeper returned with the information that Akbar was not in his room, and that his bed had not been disturbed.

“Are his clothes and toilet articles in place?” asked Jack.

“No!” cried the housekeeper, wringing her hands. “His room is stripped, and I found the window open. He must have left by the roof of the kitchen annex.”

Jack did not think this quick exit of the East Indian at all remarkable, for he knew that the throwing of the dart through the transom of the den would naturally have to be explained, and it was his notion that Akbar was in no position to render a satisfactory explanation of his movements of the night. This flight seemed to clear the atmosphere of suspicion so far as Saxby was concerned, and the boy turned to him with a smile.

"Akbar must have been planning flight for a long time," he said, "and he must have had a fancy for something in some of the drawers in the den. Have you any idea what it was he wanted?" he added glancing keenly at the man.

Saxby, although presumably relieved of suspicion by the flight of the other, did not seem entirely pleased with either the question or the situation. He shook his head, acting anxious and nervous, and insisted on going at once to the den to discover, if possible, he said, what had been taken by the dishonest servant.

"We can't tell a thing about it until father returns," Jack said. "All we can do now is to try to catch Akbar before he gets out of New York."

Still Saxby insisted on going to the den, and while the discussion was on the door bell rang and Ned Nestor was admitted. In a few words he was informed of all that was known of the happenings of the night and was then conducted to the den.

"If you'll excuse us," the boy said, turning to Saxby, who had followed on to the very door of the room, "Jack and I would like to look through the room alone. If you'll kindly remain up for a short time, we'll keep you posted as to our discoveries."

Saxby turned away with an angry frown,

muttering under his breath something about "fresh Boy Scouts," and Ned locked the door in his scowling face.

Much to Jack's surprise, the first thing Nestor did was to pick a small alarm clock from the floor, note the time it showed, and proceed to wind it. It had been jarred off its little shelf by the tipping of a tall cabinet.

"And so Saxby says he entered the room just before you came, does he?" asked Ned. "Well, do you see what time this clock stopped? Eight o'clock! Well, he was in here at that hour—perhaps long before that. I have two ways of proving that to you. See if you don't agree with me."

CHAPTER III.

A TELL-TALE ALARM CLOCK.

Jack regarded Nestor with an amused twinkle in his eyes.

"I knew you'd fall for it," he said, grinning. "You take to this Sherlock Holmes work like a duck to a pond. But, all the same, I'd like to know how you figure out that Saxby was in this room at eight o'clock, or before, when he says he took father to the Grand Central station and returned less than an hour ago."

"Well," Nestor said, pointing to the cabinet, the top drawer of which was half open, "you notice the under side of that drawer? What is it that discolours the wood? Blood? That's the way it looks to me. Now, see how the blood came there. The cabinet stood right there, under the clockshelf, or really against it, on one side, rather."

"That's where it belongs," Jack said, wondering what that had to do with fixing the time of Saxby's arrival there.

"See how simple it is," Nestor went on. "Saxby came in here early in the evening and began searching the drawers of that cabinet. What he wanted there is for us to find out later on. He did the work hastily, and searched one

drawer before stopping to close another. Now, do you see?"

"Not yet," Jack replied.

"At any rate," Ned continued, "he left the top drawer open while he bent his head to look through the bottom one. Then he lifted his head quickly and bumped the upper drawer. There's where he struck it—where the blood is. The blow tipped the light cabinet and it struck the clockshelf and knocked the clock down. The clock stopped at eight o'clock, so that is the time it fell. So Saxby was here at eight o'clock, if not earlier."

"Oh, yes," Jack remarked, "but any other man might have knocked the cabinet and upset the clock. You don't know that it was Saxby. He says Akbar was in here."

"Haven't I mentioned," Ned asked, ignoring the reference to Akbar, "that Saxby has a little three-cornered wound on his forehead, just at the edge of the hair?"

"No, you haven't," Jack replied, "and I don't think he has, either. I've been with him tonight, standing around in this room, and I've seen nothing of the sort."

"Look closer when you see him again," advised Ned. "I shouldn't have noticed the wound if he hadn't kept putting a hand to it."

"Then you think Saxby is the one who

stirred things up in here?" asked Jack, with the manner of one taking a defeat gracefully. "I begin to think so myself."

"I don't think anything about it—yet," Ned replied. "We know, though, that he was here before eight o'clock, and that he had the whole evening before him. He doubtless thought you had gone to bed when he turned up the lights you saw in here."

"Then he lied about the time," Jack mused, "and that shows guilt."

"Now for the other reason," Ned went on. "I said I'd give you two. When Saxby came in here his shoes were sticky with clay, clay he never took up between here and the Grand Central station while riding in an automobile. But of that later on. He came in here and began looking in the unusual places first for what he wanted—I don't know yet what that was."

"He got up on that chair to look on top of the bookcase, and left a roll of clay from the instep of his shoe there. You see how hard and dry it is now. Well, that never dried out like that in an hour. Saxby was in here early in the evening, and was probably searching the place while we were upstairs planning our Columbia river trip, and while Akbar was listening behind the screen."

"But Saxby says he saw Akbar in here,"

Jack urged. "Perhaps they were here together."

"In that case, Saxby wouldn't have mentioned Akbar at all; and it is not likely that Akbar would have tried to murder Saxby with a poisoned dart. Now, look at the dart which was thrown through the transom opening. There it is lying under the window casing. I have seen instruments of assassination like that before. The natives of the Far East are adepts in throwing them. Akbar or some of his East Indian chums threw that one, if I am not much mistaken."

Ned stepped forward and picked up the winged dart from where Saxby had dropped it. It consisted of a long, slender, polished stem of light wood, tipped with metal, and a straight feather cleft into the opposite end. There was a dark stain on the keen metal point, and the wood in which it had been imbedded was discolored, showing a bright green at the lips of the wound which had been made in the casing.

"So," Ned continued, "this dart was aimed at Saxby's life. The men were enemies and would not have been here together. More than that, if Akbar was here at all tonight, they were hunting for the same thing—something in this room—at different hours. Akbar evi-

dently believed that Saxby had discovered the thing they both wanted, for he mounted to the transom opening and tried to murder him with this East Indian weapon, the poisoned dart."

"This gets me," Jack exclaimed. "I'd like to know what Fate it is that sets us into the midst of a mystery every time we plan for a vacation trip. One would think, to hear you talk of poisoned darts, and all that, that we were in some of the Hindu temples Frank was talking about last night in the Black Bear club room up stairs."

"Now," Ned said, "do you know where your father went last night?"

Jack shook his head.

"Did you know that he was going anywhere?"

"No," was the anxious reply. Ned's words and manner seemed to indicate that the father might be in danger somewhere.

"Think," suggested Ned, "think if you happened to hear him mention any plans he had for today, for it is after midnight now."

"Why, yes," Jack said hastily, "I remember now that he was to go to his offices at nine this morning to meet a client. I can't see why he left the city last night."

"I don't think he did leave the city last eve-

ning," Ned remarked, "at least not voluntarily."

Jack started at the word and grabbed Ned by the shoulder.

"What do you mean by that?" he demanded.

"Now, don't get excited, boy," Ned went on. "We've got our hands full if we use all our wits, and can't afford to get dippy at the first show of trouble. This man Saxby wanted something your father kept in this room. He wanted it tonight.

"He knew that your father would be apt to work here until a late hour, and so got him out of the way. Now, now," Ned hastened to say, as Jack dropped into a chair, "I don't mean that your father has been murdered, or anything like it. The chances are that he was driven to some lonely spot in his machine and left there, far from any means of transportation to or communication with the city."

"Then we ought to be doing something!" Jack exclaimed, bounding to his feet. "What has been done here cuts no ice in the light of this tragic possibility. Good old Dad! We'll find him if we have to put thumbscrews on Saxby!"

"Of course," Ned replied, hopefully, "of course we'll find him. It is only a question of time. Now about Saxby. From his manner at

the time we shut him out of this room, a few moments ago, I judge that he did not find what he wanted in here and was anxious to continue the hunt. That is the reason why I've had him watched during the time we've been here."

"Who was there to watch him?" asked Jack. "The servants are all scared into fits—some of them are having three at a time."

"Jimmie came with me," Ned replied. "I left him in the vestibule. Long before this he is making friends with Saxby."

"Wise little kid!" Jack exclaimed.

"Now," Ned said, "we'll open the door and let Saxby in. He may lie himself into a dangerous situation."

"It seems to me that he has already done that," Jack said, "and yet he never tried to conceal his presence here!"

Nestor threw the door open and stepped into the corridor. Neither Saxby nor Jimmie was in sight. The housekeeper and a couple of frightened female servants stood midway of the staircase, their eyes on a level with the floor.

"They want to know what is going on," laughed Jack, "and they also want the start if it comes to a marathon! Where is Saxby?" he added, calling down to the housekeeper. "Tell him to come up here."

"He's gone!" the housekeeper called back.

"Gone?" Jack repeated. "Then where's the lad that came with Nestor?"

"He went away with him," was the reply.

"Has Akbar showed up yet?" asked Ned.

"No," replied the housekeeper, slowly mounting the stairs, "and it is my belief that he never will. I've been looking through the house, and most of the gold plate is gone. He's run off with everything he could carry. Why don't the police come?"

"How do you know that Saxby didn't steal the plate?" asked Jack.

"Because he was here when the loss of it was discovered," was the reply, "and didn't show guilt. He said he was going to notify the police, and the boy said he would go with him."

"Well," said Ned, rather grimly, "we've lost the man the thieves plotted against, we've lost the plate, and we've lost the thieves. Good thing the house is heavy, or that might not be here now."

The housekeeper took this grim humor seriously and went down stairs with her face in her apron, declaring that her master had probably been murdered and buried under the North River. Then, ordering the servants off to bed, she retired to her room.

"I'd like to ask you a question," Jack said,

as the two boys stood at the head of the staircase, doubtful as to the next move.

"Go ahead," Ned replied. "I don't seem to be very wise tonight, but I'll do the best I can to give you satisfactory answers, though I'll admit that I'm not exactly clear in my mind as to the motive for this mix-up."

"You recall the discussion regarding the motor-boat trip on the Columbia river?" asked Jack.

"Certainly."

"And you recall the fact that Akbar was caught listening behind a screen?"

"You said it was Akbar."

"Well, it was. Now, do you know the fellow really believes all that dope about the treasure hidden in ruined temples?"

"I haven't a doubt of it. Queer chaps, those East Indians."

"I know he swallowed every word of it," Jack went on. "There's always been something uncanny about Akbar. I've heard him claim kinship with the Akbar said to have sailed to this country with the gold. I half believe he came over with father in order that he might be nearer to the treasure—the treasure which exists only in the imagination of newspaper space writers and fellows like Frank!"

The last was half a question asked of Ned.

"I see what you are getting at," Ned said. "You think the knowledge that we were thinking of looking up this alleged treasure during our holiday quickened his movements, and set him hot foot into a quest which he might have taken more time to prepare for if he had not overheard our talk?"

"Yes; that is just it."

"Now," Ned said, "that may account for the actions of Akbar tonight, but what about Saxby?"

"I'm connecting the two in the search of this room," Jack replied.

"Both looking for the same thing, eh?"

"It seems that way to me."

"Well, what were they searching for?"

"For an old, worm-eaten book, I suspect," Jack replied, with some hesitation. "You see, Ned," he went on, "I wasn't quite frank about that hidden temple matter when it was under discussion up in the club room."

"You had heard the story before, then?"

"Oh, yes, a great many times—from father, and Saxby, and Akbar, and, then, I had read it in the book I have just mentioned—the book I think they were looking for."

"Where did your father get the book?"

"Picked it up in London. He really thinks there may be something to the story."

"So Akbar and Saxby knew about the book being here? Well, they raced each other to get it, I guess. Do they both believe in the yarn? Have you talked with them about it lately?"

"You see," Ned went on, "there must have been some sort of arrangement for them to leave the city tonight—not together, of course—for Saxby could not expect to come back here after taking your father on a wild-goose chase, as I believe he did."

"No, they never agreed on anything," Jack said. "Each one wanted the book. I am satisfied of that. Akbar must have thought Saxby had discovered it, for he tried to murder him. At least, I don't think the poisoned dart was thrown at me."

"Yes," Ned mused, "I take it that Saxby stole a march on Akbar. But what set the thing to buzzing so just now?"

"I believe our Columbia river trip did it," Jack answered. "You see, I've been talking about it quite a lot, and talking with the two about the temple, too, in a careless way, and I presume they both think we're going out solely after the treasure. They have asked

me lots of questions, and seemed friendly to each other up to tonight."

"Then Saxby played traitor," Ned decided, "and Akbar watched and saw what he was doing. Saxby must have known that Akbar was listening for something new concerning the trip, and Akbar must have suspected what Saxby was at, but the latter only knew that something really new about the trip was doing, for he listened in the club room and learned that the trip had finally been decided on.

"And he might have been waiting outside the den door, ready to kill Saxby when he came out with the book," suggested Ned, after a short pause.

"He might have been," Jack went on, "up to the time I saw him on the porch. It was after that that he hurled the poisoned dart. Cheerful sort of a chap, that Akbar," the boy added. "Probably he's after Saxby right now, thinking he found the book."

"Well, it seems that we have figured the thing out about right," Ned observed. "The men are now deadly enemies, and will chase each other to the ends of the earth. Now, the next question is this: Where did Saxby leave your father?"

"It seems to me that we've been awfully slow in coming to poor Dad," Jack replied,

“and yet, we couldn’t very well act until we knew where we stood.”

While the boys talked over the situation the ‘phone in the lower corridor set up a great whirring and Jack hastened down. He was back in a few moments with a smiling face.

“Dad’s all right!” he shouted. “Saxby left him on a country road miles out in Westchester county, and he’s just got to a ‘phone. Say, but he’s hot under the collar. Wants me to be sure and have Saxby pinched. Huh! I guess we’ll find him first!”

“I can imagine your very dignified father standing in a country road watching his automobile going off without him!” laughed Ned.

“If he’d ‘a’ had a gun,” Jack said, “he’d ‘a’ shot a tire off. He says he’ll be home as soon as he can get here. Found a machine up there somewhere.”

“Glad he’s safe!” Ned observed. “Now, what about Jimmie?”

“Oh, yes; about Jimmie! He followed Saxby!”

“Speak of angels and you hear the rustle of their wings!” laughed Ned. “The bell is ringing. That may be Jimmie now.”

And Jimmie it was, panting as if from a long run, and very much mussed as to hair and garments. He threw himself into a chair

near the door of the den and looked about with shining eyes. The two boys waited for him to speak.

"Say," he burst forth, presently, "what kind of a game is this?"

"Saxby didn't call the police, as he said he would, eh?" asked Ned.

"Call the police!" cried Jimmie. "Huh! He went to a dizzy old joint down on Fourteenth street and hauled me in with him. I'll bet he's got an eye on him, too! I give him me educated left. He's off on the choo-choos before this."

"How did you get away from him?" asked Jack.

"He left me with a gink that wasn't next to me skill as a wrestler, an' I tipped him over and run. He mussed me up some, though," he added, with a grin at his torn garments.

"Why do you say Saxby has taken a train?" demanded Ned.

"Because I heard him talking about time-tables and trains for Chicago. He thought I wouldn't get away for a week, and so talked freely. This is a nice game, I don't think!"

The three boys discussed plans most of the remainder of the night, after notifying the police to watch the railroad stations for Akbar and the pawnshops for the stolen plate. Early

in the morning Mr. Bosworth returned, very much in need of sleep and very ragged as to temper.

“One of the two secured the book,” he said, after listening to the story of the night and looking through the den. “No one here knows which one discovered it, but I can imagine that Saxby got it. Anyway, when you boys get up on the Columbia you’ll have plenty of excitement watching two cranks hunting for a ruined temple which probably doesn’t exist.”

Jack’s eyes were shining, but he made no reply.

“That will heighten the interest,” laughed Ned. “But, Mr. Bosworth, it would be a joke if there should be a ruined temple in some of the canyons up there, now wouldn’t it?”

CHAPTER IV.

THE BLACK BEAR AND THE WOLF.

Every evening for a week the five boys who had decided to visit the Columbia river country met at the club room of the Black Bear Patrol and discussed the details of the trip in prospect. Naturally, they for a few nights talked of the happenings in the Bosworth house on the occasions of the disappearance of the two servants, but, as neither Saxby nor Akbar was taken by the police, this phase of the matter soon passed out of their talk, though not out of their thoughts.

Now and then, of course, Frank Shaw laughingly referred to the mysterious ruins said to exist somewhere on the Columbia, and Jimmie McGraw often threatened the boys with the displeasure of the ghosts attached to the ruins, but the youngsters were too busy with the details of the vacation to give serious attention to such talk, and the work of preparation went swimmingly on.

After a good deal of investigation it was decided that the motor boat which was to serve as their home for a number of weeks should be built at the automobile factory of Harry

Stevens' father and shipped to some up-river town by express.

"If we wanted a crude houseboat," Harry explained to his chums, "we could build one of lumber at any old river town, but we've got to have a boat that we can shoot up rapids, one that will ride like a duck on rough water. It must be light, and so constructed that it can be taken to pieces when we want to carry it around falls and rapids."

"Huh!" Jimmie observed. "Such a boat would cost all the money there is in the world. Guess you'd better wake up!"

"It won't cost us a cent," Harry explained. "Father is going to give it to me, and I'll let you ride in it if you'll stop talking of Hindu temples in the state of Washington."

"Anyway," Jimmie contended, "it will take a barrel of money to get it out there."

"Nix!" laughed Jack. "Nix express charges! I'd like to know what Dad is mixed up with these express companies for if we've got to put up our good money to get the boats out to the Columbia river country."

"When will the boats be ready?" asked Jimmie, capering about the room.

It seemed almost too good to be true! A whole summer on the Columbia river!

"Dad says they'll be ready in two weeks,"

Harry replied, "and declares they'll be as strong as steel and as light as a feather. And now," he added, "where are they to be shipped?"

"Why, to Portland, of course;" Jimmie stopped dancing a moment as he answered the question. "At Portland we'll get another view of the Pacific ocean. Pretty poor, eh?"

Ned shook his head. The boats could be better floated down stream than speeded against swift currents, and he explained that they ought to ship to some point as far north as convenient, and then follow their own inclinations as to what to do.

"We're going for the fun of it," he said, "and we can go up stream or down, or loaf about in quiet stretches for a month if we want to. Of course there are falls and rapids in plenty, but we can take the boats to pieces and tote them around. And fish! You wait for the mountain trout!"

"Quit!" roared Jimmie. "You make me hungry! Say," he added, with a wink at Jack, "do the folks eat candles away up north where we are going?"

"You can drink kerosene if you want to," laughed Ned, "but it is warmer up there in the winter than it is here. Of course," he continued, with a grin in Frank's direction, "if

you get cold you might build a fire in one of the ruined temples."

"You just wait!" said Frank.

"Well," Ned added, "we won't go so far north that we'll freeze. You boys don't want to float exclusively through orchards and grain fields, do you?"

"Not any!" Jimmie responded. "It is the wild places for mine."

"Well," Ned said, "by going far north, say, to Nelson, B. C., we can drift down the Kootenay river to the Columbia, or, if we feel like it, we can run northeast into Kootenay lake, a fine body of water. There are steamers there."

"Us for the Columbia!" Jack grinned. "Haven't we got to give Frank a chance to dig gold out of heathen temples? I guess yes!"

"Well," Ned went on, "after we get down to the Columbia we can run up into Arrow lakes if we want to. Plenty of water up there!"

"I've been lookin' it up," Jimmie confessed, "an' there's Indian reservations, an' trackless forests, an' mines, an' mountains, an' no railroad for miles an' miles along the river. We'll ride the boats days an' sleep on the banks nights."

"And a great, big, fat, ugly bear will come

along and eat off little Jimmie's ear," grinned Frank.

Jimie laid a map of Washington and British Columbia down on the table.

"Look here," he said, "I want Frank to show me right now where them temples is. I don't want to overlook anything. If Saxby an' Akbar go up there I want to help pinch 'em. There's a reward out for Akbar."

"But what about the pieces of eight?" asked Jack, with a slight sneer.

"I don't believe in them temples," Jimmie said, "nor yet in any pieces of eight, but I think Saxby an' Akbar do, so I'd like to know where these temples are believed to be. They'll go there, all right."

"I have heard talk about a map in the old book which disappeared that night," Jack said, "and I've heard father talking of the location of the fabled temple. He said it was in a mountain range north of the river—in a rocky canyon now growing trees."

"It's a pipe dream," said Jimmie, "but they believe in it. That's enough for us to get a line on them. I'll punch Saxby's nose for tryin' to lock me up!"

"There's something to the temple yarn," Frank Shaw insisted. "The story never originated in the brain of a crank. It doesn't seem

to me that any vessel of the early years of the eighteenth century could ever get far up the Columbia, much less lug along truck enough for a temple, still, as you all know, the stolen book was printed in England years and years ago, and the material for it was collected in India. Anyway, there's belief in India that the gold was taken away by one of the old Akbar persons and buried somewhere on this continent."

"The legend goes back a good many years," Ned said, "for I've been looking it up a little since the larceny of the book. The story that the gold was taken away seems to be all right, but, so far as I can learn, no one has ever seen a trace of the temple where Akbar is supposed to have placed it."

"You fellows are all dippy about that temple!" Jack cut in shortly. "Cut it out, and let us get down to brass tacks. What kind of a boat is this going to be—a motor boat that can be taken to pieces and put together again whenever we come to a waterfall or a channel crammed with rocks?"

"It will be a peach," Harry declared. "You've seen these chair-seats, made up of three or four sheets of wood? Thin pieces, I mean, laid one on top of another, with the grain crossed in each layer? Well, that's the

way our boat is to be built, only the material will be more than an inch thick, instead of a quarter of an inch, like a chair bottom."

"The glue will soak up," interposed the practical Jimmie.

"We've got glue in our shop that water won't touch," asserted Harry scornfully. "Well, the boat will be plenty big for five—twenty feet long and six feet wide—and there will be places to swing bunks and places to store provisions, and all that."

"And I suppose you'll carry the engine around the rapids in your fingers!" laughed Jack, who was rather in favor of a roomy houseboat.

"Oh, I can't tell you all about it right on the spur of the moment," Harry laughed, "but you'll find the motor boat all o. k. The whole interior can be enclosed in panels, if we want to shut ourselves in. It's going to be a bird, all right, with about all the conveniences of a private Pullman."

"I'm not going to stay on board all the time," Jimmie observed. "I'm going to take a shelter tent along and sleep on the shore."

"I'm going to live on a fish diet," said Jack. "I don't think I ever in all my life had fish enough at one meal."

"Then why don't you go an' buy a whale and eat him up?" asked Jimmie.

"Oh, the reason I've never had enough at one meal," replied Jack, "is because I don't hold enough."

And so the boys planned, and dreamed dreams, and joked, until the motor boat was ready. It was indeed a "bird," as Harry expressed it. It was so constructed that it could be taken apart with very little trouble and no risk whatever. It was very strong, too, and handsomely finished.

With the motor boat came what the boys called a "tender," an absolutely water-tight boat of unique construction in which gasoline and provisions were to be towed. When entirely closed, the boat looked as much like a long, sharp-nosed projectile as anything else. With the panels all closed, the "tender" might be set adrift in the wildest current with no danger of getting wet on the inside.

"It's a toy submarine!" Jack exclaimed, on first seeing it. "I believe I could ride Niagara in her. What's she made of?"

"Layers of steel and wood," replied Harry. "She was built to shoot rapids. Now, what shall we call her?"

"The tender or the motor boat?" asked Jimmie.

"We've got a name for the motor boat," Ned said. "We're going to call her the *Black Bear*. Harry settled that when he gave her to the Black Bear Patrol."

"Why not call her the *Boy Scout*?" asked Jimmie. "She'll go scoutin' around a good deal before she gets rid of this bunch."

"Ship's feminine," laughed Harry. "You can't call a girl a Boy Scout, can you? I don't know why ships are feminine, but they are, just the same."

"It's because the riggin' costs so much," Jimmie ventured.

"That alleged joke is 4,000 years old," Jack put in. "Now, what shall the tender be called?" he added.

"*Greenback*," suggested the irrepressible Jimmie.

"Why?" asked Jack.

"'Cause *Greenback* would be legal tender," replied the boy, dodging away from a blow aimed by Jack.

"I've got a name to suggest," Harry said, in a moment. "We've got the boat named for one Boy Scout Patrol, now suppose we name the tender for the other. It shall be the *Wolf*. There are two Patrols mixed up in this crowd, remember, the Black Bear and the Wolf. That will about even things up."

And so the boats were named to the satisfaction of all, and, after much discussion, shipped by express to Nelson, British Columbia. The following day the five boys took train for the same point, arriving on the afternoon of the fifth day, after a very pleasant trip. The boats were not expected for a couple of days, and so the boys went to the Sherbrooke Hotel and registered. They were given comfortable rooms and found plenty of amusement, later on, looking over the city.

"She's a busy little beauty," Frank said, sitting before his window the next morning and looking out on the town, speaking to Jimmie. "There is the flavor of the West over everything."

"It looks pretty good to me," said the boy.

"When Nelson is as old as New York is now," Frank went on, "she'll be great. Think of the possibilities! Here the city lies, at the extremity of the west arm of Kootenay lake, a body of water navigable and picturesque, with snow-capped peaks in sight. That is, they are snow-capped at certain seasons of the year.

"I've been out looking over the city, and it looks good to me. Its lower portion lies in the broad valley-mouth of the Cottonwood, and its upper portion almost touches the shadows of Morning and Evening mountains. Off over

there," pointing, "is Granite mountain, standing like a guard. Why, this town is the center of the greatest mining region in Canada.

"Take it from me, in a few years this district will have an immense population, for people in search of homes and investments are sure to take advantage of the rich country about here—the Kootenay country, they call it. It is said to be the most fruitful in the world. And wild scenery within reach! Well!"

"Somehow," Jack said, stepping into the room, "I don't care for the wild places only as I care for the theatre—for a change. If you leave it to me, mountains and plains, and rivers and seas, are crude, unfinished, out of drawing, as an artist would express it. It is only the work of man that is artistic and complete."

"You talk that way out here," Jimmie observed, "and you'll get shot up. I know what these persons think of their country."

"In a few million years," Jack insisted, with a chuckle, "Nature may be able to put up something equal in artistic effect and convenience to the Singer building, but I don't believe it. Why, we're catching Nature right in the midst of her job out here, with her sleeves rolled up," he went on. "The rivers are tumbling the earth into the sea, the little streams

are washing the mountains down and spreading them over the valleys. Nothing is stable, permanent. It all looks to me like the mess about a big sky-scraper that is going up on the Great White Way. The big town for me, except for a vacation!"

"You're a crank on New York," Frank exclaimed. "You think that nothing counts if it is half an hour's ride from Broadway. Come on, suppose we go down to the river."

"The Columbia?" asked Jimmie. "Hurry up! I want to see it."

"The Columbia river is still some distance away," Frank replied. "That is the Kootenay river down there. I move that we go and look at it, so Jack can point out what's the matter with it, and explain how it ought to be changed over and made to resemble the North river—which isn't a river at all, by the way, but an arm of the Atlantic ocean."

"Why," grinned Jack, "the North river is the Harlem river. Anybody ought to know that. It cuts across from the Hudson and makes an island of little old New York."

"Island — nothing!" Jimmie exclaimed. "The Harlem river is about as big as a sewer, and New York isn't on an island, and Coney island isn't an island, and—and but it's a

mighty good old town, for all that," he added, his eyes shining.

"Fight it out later!" Frank said, knowing that both boys were talking principally for effect. "Just now, suppose we go down to the river and look at the boats."

The three boys descended to the street and walked down to the launch-crowded water front. The day was young, the sun was shining brightly, and the early June air was sweet and refreshing. Leaving the principal street, after a time, they walked parallel with the water for a short distance until they came to a narrow street which seemed to lead down to a little private wharf.

"Come on," Jimmie cried, bounding on ahead. "I'm goin' to see what the water of the Kootenay feels like!"

"You'll find it good and cold," Frank said.

"You'll get pinched if you try to go in swimming there," Jack warned. "You needn't think there are more no cops because you're out of New York. They have real copy cops out here."

"Anyway," Jimmie insisted, "I'm going to see if there is a place where I can get in without makin' an exhibition of meself. Watch me investigate that warehouse on the left!"

The lad swung down the street and disap-

peared through the doorway of what appeared to be a large warehouse which fronted the water. Jack and Frank passed on to the edge of the wharf and looked up and down the river. In a moment, while they stood there, a cry of alarm reached their ears, and the next moment Jimmie, clothed only in trousers and shirt, and carrying his coat, shoes and cap in his arms dashed out of an open window of the warehouse and tumbled over on the ground.

“Gee!” he cried, half laughing, as Jack and Frank came up to him, “chase yourself in there an’ see what you’ll get against!”

CHAPTER V.

AKBAR AND SAXBY APPEAR.

"You chase yourself out of sight until you get dressed!" Frank exclaimed, while Jack stood back and roared at the ludicrous figure the lad cut with his bare feet and half-clothed figure. The garments he carried in his arms were dropping out of his grasp and littering the street, while one tan sock waved in the wind from the sill of the window from which he had leaped.

"Gee," Jimmie grunted. "Take a look in there, you fellers! You'll miss something if you don't."

"What is it?" asked Frank.

"Probably one of the ghosts from the ruined temple what ain't," laughed Jack, with sarcasm.

"Go on in!" urged Jimmie, the frightened look passing out of his face. "Go on in an' see the big show!"

Frank hastened to the window from which the boy had leaped and looked inside. Then he sprang on the sill and stepped into the interior. As he did so, Jimmie gave a shrill

scream and rolled on the ground, and Frank leaped back.

"You little imp!" Frank exclaimed, half angrily. "What did you do that for? I thought some wild animal had you."

"Had you, you mean!" Jimmie grinned. "What did you see in there?"

"Nothing."

"Go on an' look again."

Frank was about to comply when a splash in the river at the distant end of the warehouse attracted the attention of all three boys.

"He's gettin' away!" roared Jimmie. "Go an' stop him."

The boys dashed down to the wharf end, Frank leading, just in time to see a small row-boat speeding away. The figure in the boat was pulling for dear life, and the boat was soon out of sight behind a cluster of vessels lower down.

"Ever see that feller before?" asked Jimmie.

Then Jack recalled the short, bull neck, the small, sharp, black eyes, seen for an instant when the rower turned, and clapped Jimmie on the back.

"Saxby!" he cried.

"The same," Jimmie answered, nudging

Jack. "He's goin' up to the mountains after that gold!"

"What was he doing in that warehouse?" asked Frank.

"Looked to me like he was tracin' an old map," Jimmie replied. "The boat he rowed off in was in there on the floor, by his side."

"Did he see you?" asked Jack.

"See me? You bet he did. He came after me with a knife in his hand, c-r-e-e-pin' along like the villain does in the play. Guess he thought I didn't see him. Well, I didn't until I was most ready to plunge from a window into the river."

"What did he say?" asked Jack, with a wink at Frank.

"Say! He might have recited 'Curfew Shall Not Ring To-night,' for all I know." the boy answered. "I was busy, just then, gettin' my duds together an' gettin' out. Say, we'll hear from that chap when we get in the woods."

The boys retraced their steps to the open doorway of the warehouse and went in. Numerous empty tin cans and paper bags were scattered about on the floor behind a row of barrels in one of the corners toward the river, and a great heap of excelsior, evidently stolen

from the packing room, showed signs of having been used as a bed.

"He's been doin' light housekeepin' here, all right," Jimmie concluded. "Now, I wonder why he did that?"

"Probably broke," Jack suggested.

"Can't you think of a better reason than that?" asked Frank.

"Sure I can," Jack replied, after a moment's thought. "He was hiding in here from someone. He even hauled his rowboat in here."

"Who's he hidin' from?" demanded Jimmie. "I guess he's been doin' somethin' to put him in bad with the cops."

"He's hiding from Akbar!" Jack exclaimed. "Why, that's easy! And that means that both the rascals are in Nelson! They sure believe in that bum story of the ruined temple and the subterranean passage choked with gold!"

"Who'd thunk it?" grinned Jimmie. "Say, do you suppose they'll trail us into the Columbia river country?" he added, with a rather startled expression.

"They won't trail us," Jack suggested. "They'll try to beat us to it. I wonder which one will get the jolt first?"

"Get what jolt?" asked Frank.

"The jolt of the discovery that there ain't

no temple there, never was a temple there! I reckon that will hold 'em for a while!"

"Don't be too certain there's nothing there," Frank said. "All this talk means something. I half expect to find ruins of some kind."

"I know one ruin you'll find if Saxby gets sight of Akbar first!" Jack laughed. "You'll find the ruins of a human figure!"

"I hardly think it worth our while, just now, to try to follow Saxby," Frank said, in a moment. "He's lost in some out-of-the-way hole before this, and, besides, we've nothing special to say to him, anyway. Perhaps we'd better go and tell Ned what we saw when we had no guns with us."

"Gee!" exclaimed Jimmie, glancing down at his bare feet, "I reckon I'd better go and get me duds on! I'll sure get t'run in if I go about in this way."

The boy was not long in getting into his clothes, and then all three hastened back to the hotel to confer with Ned. They found him engaged in serious conversation with Harry Stevens, who had just returned from the express office.

Jimmie approached the two with a very sober face and an air of mystery.

"I'll give you three guesses," he said.

Ned looked the boy over inquiringly, then,

glancing at Jack and Frank, saw that there really was something to tell.

"Akbar!" he exclaimed. "That's the first guess."

"Nothin' doin'," said Jimmie.

"Then I waive the other two," laughed Ned.

"Why did you guess we had seen or heard of Akbar?" asked Frank, a quick suspicion coming to his mind.

"Because," Ned replied, "we went out to the express office, just after you left, to see about the boats, and there learned that a man answering to Akbar's description had been there asking about them."

"The nerve of him," cried Jimmie. "He's got Saxby beat a mile."

"What's that about Saxby?" asked Harry.

"He chased me with a knife that looked to be more'n' nine feet long," explained Jimmie.

"This morning?" asked Ned, visibly alarmed by the news.

"Sure," replied the boy, and then the story of what had taken place at the warehouse by the river was told.

"But the nerve of Akbar!" Jimmie concluded. "He's tryin' to get our boats, is he? He'll get a wallop if he don't watch out!"

"Well," Ned said, "there is now no doubt that the fellows are up here in the belief that

there is gold hidden up the river. We'll have to keep a keen lookout for them or they'll make us trouble.'

"How the Old Harry did Akbar know the boats had been shipped here?" asked Frank. "That's what gets me."

"He probably found out about our plans before leaving New York," was Ned's reply. "He appears to be a foxy sort of chap. I have no doubt he listened to a lot of talk that went on in the Black Bear Club-room. Anyway, he's out here, and we'll have to watch out for him."

"He's got the coin, too," grumbled Jack. "He stole Dad's gold plate. I'd like to soak him one."

"If Saxby and Akbar would only get together," laughed Frank, "we'd be relieved of the presence of both. I should like to see the fight."

"And won't they be disappointed," said Jack, with a nudge at Frank's ribs, "when they get to the end of their journey and find no ruined temple, no gold, no nothing but forests and mountains! I'd like to be there then."

"Get it out of your system," grunted Frank. "You'll see that there's something to this ruined temple business."

"Honest," said Jack, "do you still believe

there is a ruined temple up here, with underground passage filled with gold?"

"I don't know what I believe," replied Frank. "But you'll see that there's something to the story."

And so the two boys argued back and forth until Jimmie left to look over the town and Ned and Harry went to their rooms to write letters home. In the afternoon Jimmie came running back to the hotel with the startling information that the express company had broken all records and brought the boats in on time.

"Come on out an' get 'em," the boy urged. "I want to see how they look in the water. Suppose we sleep on board to-night?"

"Me for the town to-night," Jack replied. "I want to meet some of the boys who run motor launches on the lakes. There's a big club here—club of sports, who have all kinds of fun. I want to meet them."

"Huh!" Jimmie grunted, "I don't see what there is to look at in this old town. Nothin' doin' for me! I want to get away to the mountains. When I see a town, kids, I want to see some town."

Now Frank, who had made good use of his time, and had also read up on Nelson and the

Kootenay country, came back at Jimmie with great pride in his knowledge.

"There are two hundred boats in the Launch club," said Frank, "and they hold regattas which take the bun. Why, the west arm of Kootenay lake is a little Adriatic in the good old summer time. Some of the boats are brought from England."

"Where does all the money come from?" demanded Jimmie. "I guess you think the people up here pick it up in the streets."

"They do, almost," laughed Frank. "The whole Nelson district is specked with paying mines, and there is a timber camp every few feet. It is a great country."

"Any lions up here?" grinned Jimmie, who did not enjoy having his expressed opinion of the place so thoroughly upset.

"Nary a lion," replied Jack, "but they shoot bears and deer and caribou within ten miles of Nelson. And up at the Pool they get rainbow trout weighing twenty pounds, and Pacific salmon weighing sixty pounds."

"All right," Jimmie said. "You're tellin' it. I ain't. Perhaps these wise boys of the Kootenay Launch club can tell us how often we'll have to take the *Black Bear* to pieces before we get to the Dalles."

"You know they can," Jack put in. "You

bet our boats won't be the first to float down the Columbia. We'll go and introduce ourselves after dinner. Is it dinner at six o'clock out here, or supper?"

"Neither," laughed Jimmie. "It's chuck time."

Presently Ned and Harry made their appearance, and then the boys all went over to a business office to which the clerk at the hotel had directed them, where they met a Mr. H. H. Currie, of the Kootenay Launch club. They were invited to the club-house, and spent a very pleasant evening there. Some of the members warned the boys against falls and rapids, while others suggested that there were still river outlaws along the waterways. The lads listened to all they heard, but were not at all discouraged.

Early the following morning the boats were taken to the water front and put together, in the presence of an admiring audience. The novelty of construction was commented on favorably, and the water-tight *Wolf* closely inspected. When all was ready, the boys bade their friend goodbye and the boats threaded their way among the board-walks of the city's barrier-reef of launch-houses and, gaining the open water of the arm, turned westward followed by hearty cheers.

As they rounded Granite promontory and passed toward the narrowing, rocky walls which mark the termination of navigation, Ned flung out an American and a Canadian flag and shook it valiantly toward the towering height of Pulpit Rock, where a cluster of friends still watched, some of them evidently in the belief that the lads were going to their doom.

They passed through Grohman rapids at slow speed, taking the right side of the island, and followed the vagaries of the current as it swept around sandy points, washing jutting rocks, or filling out broad reaches. Presently the current quickened, and, four miles from the city, the boats entered the Granite rapids, shot under the bridge of the Canadian Pacific, and took the boiling waters of the rapids boldly.

On through Beaseley gorge and Cora Linn rapids, and then the boats faced the headworks of the West Kootenay Power Company's main power plant. Here were Upper Bonnington falls, and Ned did not care to risk a run over the brink, the slope being at least forty per cent. The boats were soon taken to pieces and carried around the dangerous places, although the distance was greater than they had been led to expect.

Through the dancing waters of the Pool and

then peace! Taking a shoot around the lower Pool, Ned brought the boats into a bend where great salmon, fresh from their 700-mile trip from the Pacific, make their spawning beds. From this point all was comparatively easy sailing to the Columbia, 27 miles away.

It was a beautiful morning, and the setting of the scene was all that the most critical adventurer could have wished. The river was wild and careless as to its human freight at times, but there was the lines of the Canadian Pacific in view, tying the lads to civilization. Finally, however, much to Jimmie's delight, the railroad dodged off to the west, but, much to the boy's disgust, soon dodged back again, and kept with the river to Robeson, where it crosses the Columbia and turns south on the west side.

The boys were anxious to get out of the railroad zone, and so made good speed, stopping at none of the little towns along the river. At Murphy the metals shot out to the west, and then the boys, after a short drive down, found a suitable place and went ashore.

"I'm glad we've got rid of the railroad," Jimmie said, looking about the pleasant scene. "I guess they didn't bring the line along here because the hills and rocks might make trouble.

I hope we won't see a rail again in three months."

"You'll not get your wish," Jack replied, "for the Great Northern trails the river, on the west bank, a short distance down. Nature and civilization seem to be pretty well joined here. We are now not very far from Marcus, in the state of Washington, not far below the boundary line."

The boys had chosen an ideal site for a camp. The hills, the forest, the rushing river, the dim haze on the elevations away to the west, all conspired to bring to the breasts of the city-bred boys the keen recognition of the mighty forces at work beyond the sky-scraper zone.

It was not yet sundown when the lads had completed their evening meal. Indeed, the sun still showed a round disc above the treetops when they packed the dishes away and prepared for a delightful evening. The *Black Bear* lay open to the evening air, the panels not having been put up. Hammocks had been hung from the corner standards, however, and Jack and Harry lay lazily swinging to and fro as the boat dipped and pulled in the current. Ned, Frank and Jimmie sat by the fire which had been built in the interest of the evening meal.

The boys had had a hard day and were tired

out, though each one tried to conceal the fact from all the others. The Columbia river between the junction and the point where they lay is anything but a lake-like body of water, and the lads had been kept busy. Directly Frank called out:

“Think the man who built the Singer building could put up anything like this, Jack?”

“It’s all right,” Jack replied, “only I miss the after-dinner orchestra.”

“Oh, you do?” exclaimed Jimmie, as the boys laughed at the odd idea. “Well, there’s your after-dinner orchestra, and if it ain’t playin’ ‘On the Bowery’ I’m a lobster!”

CHAPTER VI.

A BRISK BATTLE SOON OVER.

The boys all sprang to their feet and listened. Faintly, softly, through the twilight, seeming at times to be a part of the rippling of the waters and the echo of the rustling leaves, came the mellow notes of a flute. For a moment no one spoke, then Jimmie exclaimed:

“What do you fellers know about that?”

“It must be one of Frank’s ghosts,” Jack replied. “Perhaps the ruined temple is over there. Let’s go and see about it.”

“There’s woods and mountains over there, and, perhaps, a few mining camps,” said Ned, “but I don’t believe there are any miners in this country who can make a flute talk like that. I think we’ll have to investigate.”

“Not much mining over there,” Harry Stevens said, in a moment. “Here,” he went on, drawing out a map and bending down to the fire with it. “Look at this. Here we are on the Columbia river, below the Kootenay branch—or the end of the west arm of Kootenay lake, rather—and this rough country to the west shows just as it is. All mountains and forests clear to the Fraser river, and that

must be two hundred miles, as the crow flies, I take it. The Rocky mountains and the Cascades seem to meet here; still, I don't think there's much mining going on."

"Well," Jack insisted, "there's some civilized human being in the forest not far away, and we ought to find out what's going on."

"Of course he's a civilized human being," Jimmie grinned. "If he wasn't he wouldn't be playin' that classical air, 'On the Bowery!' But I'm not goin' to wade into that jungle just now. I'm goin' to remain here an' reflect!"

"Some one ought to remain here, anyway," Frank said, "so you watch the boats while you reflect, and while we rescue this maiden in distress. Come on, boys."

The lads secured their weapons from the boat and started off into the dim forest. When the mysterious musician switched from "On the Bowery" to a dreamy waltz, Jack seized Frank about the waist and went dancing into the thicket.

The four boys started away together, but Ned dropped back, in a moment, and looked toward the river. Jimmie sat by the fire, his head bent forward in a listening attitude, a revolver withing easy reach of his hand.

"Come on, Ned," Jack called out.

"I'll be along directly," Ned replied.

"All right," came the answer. "Don't let a lion bite you!"

"Take good care of the boats, Jimmie," Frank shouted.

"Go on!" answered the boy. "If any one goes fussin' around here he'll get his crust busted. Say," he continued, whimsically, "if youse come to a bakery, bring me a pie! I forgot to bring canned pie!"

The three boys shouted back some laughing reply and disappeared in the underbrush which lay under the trees. Then Ned moved closer to the camp fire and hid in a clump of bushes. He was no altogether satisfied that the call from the forest was not a lure—that enemies were not lurking about, bent on mischief.

From the moment the visit to the Columbia river country had been decided on, there had been indications of surveillance. Akbar had listened at the door of the Black Bear club-room in the Bosworth house. Saxby had searched the private office of the master of the house for information concerning a ruined temple, said by fable to be not far from the proposed vacation route. The former had been seen at the Nelson express office, asking about the motor boats, and the latter had been

discovered lurking in the river-front warehouse at the same place.

Besides, at intervals during the ride from New York to Nelson, the boy had caught glimpses of men who seemed to be watching the party. Ned did not believe a word of the extravagant stories told by Frank of the alleged temple and the hidden gold, but he did believe that Akbar and Saxby were infatuated with the dreams of wealth seemingly opened to them by the yarns. Just why they should follow in the footsteps of the vacationists, Ned could not imagine.

It seemed to him that they ought to be leading the way instead of dogging the trail of the Boy Scouts. The only reason he could find for the course being pursued involved either the loss of the book taken from the den or the failure of the volume to point the way to the fabled treasure. On reflection, Ned accepted the latter reason as the most likely one.

But here was another point which the boy could not understand. If the two men who were trailing the party had been sufficiently diligent to discover the line of argument when reference to the ruined temple was made, then it seemed that they ought to know that the boys were not going into the wilds of the

Columbia with any notion of finding buried gold. Indeed, Ned was certain that the two ex-servants of the Bosworth household knew that the discovery of the gold was not the motive of the trip.

So, he thought, there must be some other reason for the perplexing surveillance now going on. Of this, of course, he had no proof; still he knew that Akbar and Saxby really had better reasons than the light talk which had been held in the club-room concerning the hidden treasure for making such a journey.

Presently, while Ned watched intently for a signal tending to show the presence of a hostile interest, Jimmie arose from his position by the fire and began gathering dry wood. After he had secured quite a store of this he began cutting green bushes and limbs and heaping them beside the other. Ned looked on in wonder, as the boy was not noted for his industry about the camp.

After a time Jimmie paused from his work and stood for a minute gazing over the forest into which his chums had disappeared. Ned watched him closely, and was about to disclose his presence there when the boy began heaping the dry wood into three piles, all in a straight line, the fire already burning at one end.

This finished, he heaped the green boughs on top of the piles.

While Ned watched with growing interest he heard a soft footfall in the thicket and directly Harry Stevens stood by his side.

"What's Jimmie doing?" the latter asked.

"Just what I was trying to puzzle out," was the reply.

Jimmie now took living brands from the campfire and ignited the three heaps, at the same time throwing green boughs on the fire already going.

"Four fires!" whispered Harry.

"Four smoky fires!" Ned corrected.

"What does it mean?" asked Harry.

Ned chuckled and drew Harry down by his side.

"The lad is trying to beat us to the musician," he said.

"By standing still there by the fires?"

"No; by resorting to the use of the wireless."

"Well, what's the answer?"

"Indian signs," replied Ned, with a grin.

"I begin to see!"

"One column for a camp?"

"Of course."

"Two means a call for help?"

"Yes; that's it, all right, but he's got four."

“Three indicates good news?”

“Yes, of course. I remember now, and four means a call to council—in other words, Jimmie is saying to some one out in the woods ‘Come on in and we’ll talk it over.’ Is that right?” Harry added, half rising to look over the forest in search of some answering signal.

“Too early to look for an answer,” Ned said, “but you have it right. If there are either Indians or Boy Scouts about we’ll soon see some answer lifting above the tops of the trees.”

“I don’t look for any Boy Scouts up here.”

“I met several in Nelson,” Ned said.

The two boys waited, watching the heavy columns of smoke lift in the sky for several minutes, and then Ned asked:

“Where are Jack and Frank?”

“I left them climbing a hill.”

“Did you seem to be any nearer the musician when you turned back?”

“No I guess he was going faster than we were.”

“I wish we had a small rowboat here,” Ned whispered, directly. “I would like to look over the forest from the other side of the river.”

Harry pointed to the west bank below the fires.

"There's our rowboat," he said.

"No," Ned replied. "Our rowboat is tied up above the tender. I can see it now."

Harry shook his chum by the shoulder.

"Then what is that down there?" he asked.

"Seems to be a boat," Ned said, calmly.

"Well, it wasn't there when we camped."

"No; it surely wasn't."

"Well, then?"

Ned rubbed his forehead reflectively.

"I don't see how it got there," he said. "There are rapids below just around that rocky bend, and no man would be able to row a boat like that up through them. It strikes me that the people who came in that boat came down the river, and are now waiting for us with mischief in their minds."

"We ought to notify Jack and Frank," Harry suggested. "Some of the loafers may be up in the woods now; may have tuned up on that flute."

"They seem to be safe for the present," Ned replied. "We should hear a noise if they were in trouble. The thing to do now is to lay hands on these river pirates."

As Ned ceased speaking a figure shot out from the shadows nearer the fire and seized Jimmie. The boy struggled valiantly, but his

opponent was a muscular fellow and was rapidly drawing him toward the river.

“Wait until we see how many of them there are,” Ned whispered as Harry attempted to spring forward to Jimmie’s assistance. “We can get that rascal at any time.”

There were at least three more, for that number appeared on the bank of the river, lower down, and dashed toward the boats. They had evidently come from the vicinity of the rowboat.

“They’re after our boats now,” Harry gritted. “Suppose we open fire on them?”

Ned’s idea was to get close enough to the intruders to see what they looked like, so as to be able to identify them at some future time, for he knew very well that they would not stand and put up a fight under fire from the thicket. But before he could make Harry understand that they ought to advance cautiously, even capture one of the rascals if possible, that rash young man turned his automatic loose.

The shots resulted in a quick change in the situation. The three men, now at the boat, turned and ran into the forest, and the fellow who was dragging Jimmie along followed them. In the meantime, however, the motor boats had been released from their fastenings

by some quick hand, and were now drifting out into the swift current. The purpose of the attack was now quite evident. The boats were in demand!

By this time Ned and Harry, inactive no longer, were running at the top of their speed along the bank, toward the drifting craft. Jimmie saw that assistance was at hand and devoted his combative talent to the capture of the man who had attacked him. But the fellow was too quick for the lad, and in a moment he was too quick, followed by a volley of bullets from the boy's automatic.

Then a double splash in the water told Jimmie that Ned and Harry were trying to regain the boats, so he seized a rope and darted after them, taking up a position a little in advance of the drifting craft. In the meantime Ned and Harry were having a desperate struggle with the current.

They knew that they would not be able to work the boats back to their former moorings, so they let them float without trying to stem their progress, all the time endeavoring to draw them nearer to the shore. When they came opposite to where Jimmie stood he tossed Ned the end of his rope, and in a moment the danger was past.

Jimmie was drawn down the stream on a

run as the two boats pulled at the line, but in a short time Ned and Harry joined him on the bank and the boats were hauled in and tied up. Then the boys looked at each other for a moment without speaking, Ned and Harry dripping with river water.

“Wouldn’t that get you?”

Jimmie was the first to speak. He looked at Ned and then passed his eyes over the forest to the west.

“They came pretty near getting the boats,” Harry said, dripping and panting.

“Why did they quit so soon?” asked Jimmie. “They might have got away with the bluff.”

“Because,” Ned said, thoughtfully, “they do not know how to run the motor boat, and did not dare embark in it after they had failed quietly to capture you.”

“That must be it,” Jimmie answered, “but, all the same, they’d ’a’ got mighty few lessons in boat management from me. Where do you think they came from?”

“I imagine they’ve been following us in the hope of annexing the boats,” Harry replied. “Such boats as the *Black Bear* and the *Wolf* are not often seen in these waters, you know.”

“And one of them played the flute?” demanded Jimmie, throwing more wood on the

fires in order that Ned and Harry might dry themselves. "I don't believe it!" he added, giving the negative to his own question.

"You may search me if you think I have any information on the subject!" laughed Harry. "I don't know a blooming thing about it! For all I know, these chaps may be in quest of Frank's ruined temple!"

Jimmie grinned, and then turned to Ned, who seemed to be watching some movement in the forest, or above it.

"Say!" he said, then, "there's the answer to my wireless!"

"That's right," Harry said. "Indian signals."

"How many columns of smoke do you see?" asked Ned.

"Two," replied both the others.

"That's a call for assistance," Ned said, thoughtfully.

"Jack and Frank are in trouble, then!" declared Harry.

"I hardly think," Ned said, "that they have had time to get as far away as those columns of smoke are. Those fires must be a mile away."

"Huh!" Jimmie put in. "We couldn't see 'em if they were."

"We could if they were high up above us," Ned went on.

"Well, anyway, it's a Boy Scout signal for help," Jimmie insisted, "and I'm goin' to see what it's all about."

"I believe it's just another scheme to geeze the boats," Harry said, in a moment.

"Let them alone. Where do you suppose Jack and Frank are?"

The question was answered by the appearance of the boys in person. They had heard the shots and hastened back to camp.

"Did you bring your band with you?" asked Jimmie.

"There's no band in there," Jack replied. "That's nothing but a noise!"

"We had something more than a noise here," Jimmie grinned, pointing to the boats, much lower down stream than before.

The situation was explained in a few words, and the boys gathered closer to study out the difficult problem now presented.

"I can't understand about that music," Ned said, after a short silence. "Did you hear it distinctly after you got into the forest?"

"It grew fainter," Frank replied. "Seemed as if the man playing it was riding away from us at good speed."

"And the Indian signals?" asked Ned.

"What about that feature of the evening's entertainment?"

"Why, we saw your signals," was the reply, "and heard your shots, and so we came into camp."

"But there was a call for help back of you in the forest," Ned said. "Is it possible that you didn't see that?"

"Never a see," Jack said. "Of course the trees would prevent our getting a sight of it. You might see it from here, but we couldn't from where we were."

"It's mighty queer," remarked Frank.

"Speaking of the evening's entertainment," laughed Jimmie, "what do you think of callin' it off an' goin' to bed? For a real lively show, with guns in l. u. e., this seems to be the right thing. I'm goin' to bed an' forget it."

"Go to it," said Jack. "I'll sit up and give your friends a cordial reception if they show up during the night. Tumble in, kids, and see your uncle stand guard!"

Ned did not follow Frank and the others to the boat when they prepared their beds for their first out-of-door sleep on the trip, but remained by the comfortable fires which Jimmie had built. The sun had long since disappeared and a silvery moonlight lay over

the landscape. Jack was first the break the silence.

"The strange rowboat is gone," he said, excitedly. "I saw it there a short time ago, but they've come back and sneaked it off. River pirates, eh?"

"Probably," Ned replied, his eyes fixed on the forest elevations to the west.

"Then you don't think Akbar or Saxby guilty of that attack?"

"It doesn't seem as if they would follow us with a force of strangers," Ned replied. "No, I guess river outlaws wanted our boats. And," the boy continued, "I'm of the opinion that they'll keep on trying to get them. You noticed that they did not take the chance of smashing them in the rapids? And they not only want the boats, but they want to get one of us to run them. At least that is the way it looks to me now."

"The boats sure do look attractive," Jack agreed. "Are you still watching the Indian signals?" he added, seeing his chum's attention was still fixed on the distant forest.

"I've seldom taken my eyes from them," was the reply. "There are three columns of smoke now, and that means 'Good news.' So, you see, there's been a change in the situation since sundown."

“The Canadian Pacific line is over there,” Jack mused, half to himself, “and the smoke columns may be just accidental. I shouldn’t wonder if tramps were cooking their supper on the railroad’s right of way.”

But Ned could not settle the matter so comfortably. On reflection he became convinced that the attack had really been made by river outlaws who wanted to secure the boats, that the signals were genuine and intended as a means of communication with the authors of the four-column signal, and that the two treacherous servants who had followed them from New York would be heard from later on.

Although Jack insisted on standing guard, Ned did not sleep much that night. His mind was too full of anxiety to admit of slumber. However, the smoke signals soon died out, and the night lay white under the moonlight, broken only now and then by the call of a night bird or the rustling of the thicket as some wild creature passed that way.

CHAPTER VII.

THE BLACK BEAR TAKES A DROP.

The sun arose in a cloudless sky the next morning and the boys were early astir. Ned and Jack slept a couple of hours while the others were getting breakfast and making ready for the start and awoke as brisk and eager for the day's adventures as were their chums. Before leaving the camp Jack and Harry strolled into the woods and looked about for some signs of their serenade party.

"If the chap who played the flute wasn't one of Frank's ghosts," Jack said, "we ought to find some of his tracks not far from the river."

"I reckon it must have been a dream," laughed Harry.

"Dream nix!" was the reply. "Anyway, that soloist, or some one in here, answered Jimmie's Indian signals. If we go in far enough we may find where he built his fire."

"Those columns of smoke," Harry insisted, "were, as Ned says, at least a mile away. The reason we saw them so plainly is because they were on an elevation, and the moonlight struck them at just the right angle. If we wait to find where he camped, we'll never get down the

river. The flute player was nearer to us, but he probably left no tracks."

Jack was finally induced to take this view of the matter, and the two returned to camp just as the boys were ready to push off. The double-cylinder engine of the *Black Bear* was popping merrily, and the *Wolf* lay ready to follow in her wake. Ned took the wheel and they were off.

In half an hour they came in sight of the rapids whose murmur they had listened to at intervals during the night, and Ned drew up toward the west bank, out of the strong current. Jimmie shrugged his shoulders and pointed down stream.

"That's nothin'," he cried. "Why don't you go on?"

"Too great a fall," said Jack.

Harry lifted his field-glass and inspected the swirling waters.

"I don't see any boulders," he remarked. "Suppose we try it, and see what the *Black Bear* is good for?"

There was silence for a moment, and then Jimmie shouted:

"Off we go! Anybody want to get out an' walk?"

"Well," Ned said, "I don't see any reason why we shouldn't take a chance here. We

shall find a good many places like this in the river, and I don't propose to be taking the boat apart every few minutes."

Before he ceased speaking the *Black Bear* was nosing into the current, and the speed of the craft became rather startling. The engine was, of course, kept going, for without speed-way the boat would soon have been overturned, but the current seemed to be furnishing most of the propelling power.

There was a sharp turn in the river some distance down, and Ned swung far out to the west in order to make it without being sucked against the first angle, where there was a show of boulders. By this time the boat was going like the wind, and the boys were clinging to the steel framework, or anything that seemed stable.

When the *Black Bear* came to the head of the bend so that the course before her could be seen clearly Ned's usually impassive face grew set and anxious, and he swung toward the shore. There seemed to be quite a lofty fall directly ahead.

Harry, who had clung to his field-glass throughout, bent over and whispered in Ned's ear:

"Don't try that, old chap. There are jagged

rocks all along that shore. The boat wouldn't last a minute in there."

"Then it is us for the running water," Ned said, shutting his jaws tight. "Hold tight, all you fellows," he added, facing the others, "we're going to take a drop."

"Why didn't you say so?" demanded Jimmie, with a sickly grin. "I'd 'a' brought a parachute. No wonder them tramps didn't want to take the boats out last night, and they not knowin' how to operate 'em!"

It now seemed as if nothing could prevent the costly craft being wrecked in the drop just ahead. In places the water poured over the lip of the descent smoothly, but here and there it was broken as if by underlying rocks. Off to the right there was a current which led around the west end, where the obstruction over which the river tumbled seemed to be lower.

Frank pointed this out and waited for Ned to direct the boat in that direction. Instead of doing this, however, the boy at the wheel called out to the others to hang on tight and steered for the very center of the river, where the water poured over the break in great volume, running smoothly.

It was all done in an instant. Ned reached forward and put on every inch of power the

engine afforded and set his teeth to meet the coming jump. It was a desperate game he was playing, but it seemed to be the only one worth while, the only one that held out any prospect of safety for the craft.

Almost before the boys could catch their breath the prow of the *Black Bear* was in the air over the swirl below. Frank, who was in the prow, said afterwards that the fall looked about as high as the roof of a twenty-story sky-scraper.

The boat was well balanced and did not tip. The momentum was doing much to keep it right side up. Ned had figured on this, and now he waited anxiously for the last kick of the propeller against the wall of water. If she cleared the down-tumbling mass they might save the boat. If she did not, they would be lucky if they escaped with their lives.

The last kick of the propeller pushed hard, and the boat shot clear of the vertical stream. It seemed to float in air for an instant and then drop with a thud which shook the bones in the tensely drawn figures clinging to anything within reach. But the drop was only to the surface. The staunch little boat did not dive. The racing propeller caught the water and pushed her ahead with the speed of an arrow.

When Ned slowed down the falls were a mile in the rear.

Jimmie stood up and rubbed his back. Frank and Harry turned toward Ned and looked at him as one looks at an insane person. Jack doubled up with laughter, now and then sending out a shout which echoed along the valley with mocking reality.

“What did you do that for?” demanded Frank, rubbing his chin, which had been bumped on a knee in the drop.

Ned turned the boat toward the west bank and notified Jack with a prod that it was his turn at the wheel. He was a trifle pale, but there was a smile of triumph on his resolute face.

“What did I do what for?” he asked, stretching his legs as Jack, still roaring with laughter, took the wheel.

“Give us that bump,” replied Frank. “You near broke my neck. Why didn’t you turn off to the right and drop down through that break?”

“I took a notion,” Ned replied, “to land in deep water.”

Frank studied over the proposition for a minute and then grinned.

“I’m a dunce,” he said. “If you’d ’a’ gone

down that channel the boat would have been smashed into kindling on the rocks. I see!"

"You've guessed it!" roared Jack. "I saw by the look on your face when Ned went over the falls that you thought he had gone daffy. Say, but it was funny, the way you stared at him."

"Next time, when you drop out of a twelve-story window, I'll take the elevator," said Jimmie. "I'm all scrambled, you shook me up so."

"You'd have been scrambled for keeps if Ned had taken the boat down by any other route," Jack said.

"The *Black Bear* ought to be able to go through anything, after that," Frank observed. "It is a wonder to me that her engine didn't drop through the bottom."

"That isn't the way she was built," Harry replied. "I guess Dad knows how to build a boat that won't drop to pieces the first trip! Besides, how much of a fall do you think we went over?"

"Looked like seventeen hundred feet to me," said Jimmie.

"Well, it was about five feet," Harry corrected. "If we hadn't been going so like the dickens, I guess we'd have tipped over, but

speed saved us. Desperate undertaking, though," he added.

"One I don't care about taking again," Ned said, looking over the propeller and the engine. "We'd be in a nice fix if the *Black Bear* should go back on us."

The boat was found to be unharmed, though it seemed almost a miracle that the engine had not shifted. The *Wolf*, having been built in watertight, cylindrical form to meet just such emergencies, was, of course, all right. After a close inspection of the boat Jimmie began getting out his fishing rod.

"What are you going to do with that?" asked Jack.

"Get a couple of fish for dinner," was the reply.

"I've got a picture of you catching fish in those rapids," observed Jack.

"Huh," grunted Jimmie, "one of the men at the Kootenay Launch club rooms told me that the best place to fish is just below a rush of water. You remember that when we were lugging the boats around Bonnington falls, about eighteen miles from Nelson, we saw a lot of fishers at the head of the pool. There's where they get their prize rainbow trout. The water rushes down the canyons and spreads out in the pool, and I guess the fish wait there

for food. Well, this place looks to me like the pool."

"Go it!" laughed Ned. "I wouldn't mind having a couple of rainbow trout for dinner. See what you can do, little one!"

Now, Jimmie looked upon the appellation "little one" as a term of reproach, so he frowned and set about his work with a determination to show his chums that he was anything but a "little one" when it came to catching rainbow trout. Fishing is not always a swift game. Sometimes there is more need of patience than any other quality, but there is always excitement enough in "rapids" fishing to cause one to forget everything else.

Jimmie got out the little rowboat—a light little concern which would carry only two, and which one could handle easily—and rowed up to the foot of the swiftly flowing water and, backing the boat about, cast his fly. The current caught the lure and hustled it off down stream, tossing it about on the surface as it moved on.

The boys, watching with amused interest on the shore and on the *Black Bear*, saw him give a quick pull on his line, and saw the line tighten. The boat, prow down stream, quivered and tipped a trifle, but the boy was too

busily playing the fish to pay much attention to that.

“Give him more rope!” shouted Jack.

“Pull him in!” roared Harry.

“Jump in and get him!” advised Frank.

It seemed that Jimmie rejected the advice of the first speakers and followed that of Frank, for at that moment the boat swung broadside to the current, and the boy went over, clinging to his bamboo as he ducked under.

The capsized boy was at least spared further advice and comment from the shore at that time, for it was a minute before he came to the surface again. Ned was turning on the power in the motor boat, and Jack was swinging a life buoy, but Jimmie shoved his bamboo down stream out of the way, wrapped the line once around his right shoulder, and struck out for the shore, which he reached some hundred yards below the mooring place.

The instant he struck the bank he sat calmly down and began playing the fish once more, while Jack and Frank ran down to where he sat, paying no attention whatever to the shouts of laughter which greeted him, or to Ned, swinging out in the *Black Bear* to regain the rowboat, fast drifting down stream.

“What are you doing, little one?” asked Frank. “Pulling in a fish?”

No," replied the boy, with wry face, "I'm gettin' me shoes shined."

"Do you think you've got a fish on there?" asked Jack, nudging his chum.

"No," replied Jimmie, hauling in now with good speed, "I've got a red house with green blinds on this here line. Say, why don't you fellers wake up? Sure I've got a fish on here!"

And the next moment disclosed the fact that he had really saved the fish, a fine rainbow trout weighing something over three pounds. The boys stood with wide-open eyes as he drew it up to the bank and landed it in his net.

"Talk about luck!" Jack exclaimed, in a tone of disgust. "If you should fall in a tar pit you'd come out with a clean suit on. What you going to do with that fish?"

"I'm goin' to frame it!" replied Jimmie, gravely.

By the time the three got back to the mooring place Ned was there with the rowboat in place. He examined the fish critically and advised the boy to catch one for each of the party, to which suggestion Jimmie struck a "never again" attitude and nestled down in a sunny spot on the bank.

"There's no hurry, is there, boys?" asked Ned, getting out his own rod. "We may as

well have enough for a square meal while we are at it."

"Why not run the *Black Bear* up the rapids a little ways and anchor her there?" asked Jack. "Then we might all fish in safety. Of course, Jimmie can jump in and bring his fish out, but we don't want to do that."

Jimmie grinned and lay back in the sun, while the boat was run into position and the lines put out. It was a long time before any one noted a nibble, but after that the sport was swifter, and a large basket of beauties soon adorned the "bridge deck" of the *Black Bear*, which was directly over the engine.

"If the man who serenaded us last night will kindly send in his card now," Jack remarked as the fish, done to a tender brown, lay smoking on the little table in the cabin of the *Black Bear*, "we'll give him a bite out of our meal ticket. Say," he continued, as the boys looked up with interest in their faces, "what do you think of that stunt, anyway? Who was that, and where was he going? He must have heard the shooting, and yet he cleared out so fast we couldn't catch him."

"That was the man that sent back the Indian signal," Jimmie replied.

"He'd have needed an airship to get from the point where we first heard him making

music to the place where the signals were in less than a couple of hours," insisted Frank.

"We wouldn't know what to do with ourselves if we wasn't mixed up with a mystery," laughed Harry. "If the music was intended for us we'll hear it again. Say," he went on, "where did that big rowboat go to? It never went through the rapids, and it didn't pass on up stream."

"That is another mystery," grinned Jimmie. "Who's goin' to stand guard tonight an' catch this here string band of ours—no, wind band. Anyway, who's goin' to lay awake an' grab him?"

"If you boys really think the mystery is worth solving," Ned said, "we may as well remain here tonight and keep close watch. We are not far from human habitations now, and if we should catch a couple of river thieves we might drop them at the first stop down the river. Besides, I'm a little anxious to know who it is giving us so much attention."

It was decided to adopt this suggestion. A few miles below they would come to the line of the Great Northern railroad, to a copper mining country and to two small towns. If they were to be annoyed by thieves, it would be wise, they thought, to have the battle within reach of officers of the law. They were not far from the

boundary line, and below that imaginary division of the two countries was Marcus, where the Great Northern crossed the Columbia and entered the Kettle river valley.

The Great Northern left the river at Marcus and struck it again some distance below Wenatchee, many miles down. The north side of the river between Marcus and Wenatchee is, perhaps, as little known as any part of the Northwest. There are mountains and forests and deep canyons through which the waters, hastening onward to the Pacific ocean, rush with almost incredible speed. The lads anticipated a rough time while passing through this country, and thought it might be well to rid themselves of annoyances in the way of thieves.

This point decided, they lounged about all the bright afternoon, fishing now and then, but mostly reading or walking delightedly about. Frank was invited to bring on his ghosts that night, and Jack generously offered to put any ruined temple the boy might discover into his watch pocket. But while the boys were waiting for some demonstration from their enemies, they were also concerned not a little with the problems of the music and the Indian signals.

"I'm goin' to roost in a tree tonight." Jim-

mie asserted. "I want to hear that orchestra play 'On the Bowery' once more."

"You'll hear no more flute playing like that," Frank declared. "I've decided that the player was some excursionist on the Canadian Pacific railroad—some romantic chap who possibly left the train at Rossland and strayed out in the forest. I'll bet a fish he hit only the high places after the shooting began."

And so the boys laughed and talked of their adventures, past, present, and to come, until the sun went down and the light of the moon lay over the bewitching scene. They kept very still, then, listening for what they scarcely knew.

CHAPTER VIII.

A BOY SCOUT POSTOFFICE.

Jack and Frank sat in the boat, which lay dark on the water only a few feet from the bank, while Ned, Harry and Jimmie lay concealed in the shadows to the west. In the stillness of the night they heard the rumble of far-off trains, and once Harry declared that he saw the light of a boat on the river below and heard the thud of an oar.

Just as the boys were getting sleepy and becoming discouraged as to tangible results the mellow voice of a flute came to their ears, from the west, just as it had on the previous evening. The air was "The Sweet Refrain," a favorite in the music halls of the East Side division of New York, and so artistically was it rendered that the boys sat in silence and listened until the notes died away.

"That chap's home is sure east of the Bowery," Jimmie observed, nudging Harry, who sat next to him. "What do you make of it? What is he followin' us down the river for, an' where did he pick us up?"

Before Harry could find a suitable reply to these puzzling questions the music began again,

seeming to grow louder, as if the player was approaching the camp. Harry gripped Jimmie's arm in sudden inspiration.

"You can whistle like a professional, kid," he said, "strike in and see what comes of it."

The boy "struck in," as requested, but nothing came of it.

"Wait until he stops," Ned suggested, "and then try him."

This method produced results, for an exact imitation of Jimmie's effort came from the thicket, followed by a laugh, and then silence.

The boys waited at least half an hour, imagining the approach of the strange musician in every movement of the forest, but nothing more was heard from him.

"Have you your searchlight?" asked Ned.

"Sure!" replied Jimmie.

"Then we'll go in and see what we can learn there," Ned went on. "The fellow couldn't have been more than a hundred yards away."

"He was up on that point," declared Harry. "I half believe I saw his eyes shining in the moonlight. Wait a minute! I'll get my light and go with you."

"Perhaps you would better remain here with the boat," suggested Ned. "You must remember that this is a party given for the benefit of the river outlaws."

"All right," Harry said, in a disappointed tone. "I'll go aboard and cheer Jack and Frank up a little."

"Jack an' Frank are tellin' each other lies about that ruined temple," Jimmie grinned. "They do like to roast each other about that."

"I don't believe Frank thinks there's anything of the kind," said Harry. "He's just talking for the fun of it."

"Well, Akbar and Saxby seem to believe in the tale," Ned laughed, "for they have followed us from New York. We ought to be hearing from them directly."

"Tell you what," Jimmie said, as if imparting a great secret, "Jack believes in that ruined temple story himself! He just roasts Frank to keep the argument going. I've heard him talk about the old book that was stolen, and I've an idea he used to study it an' count on coming to the ruins some day."

"He's kept pretty still about it," laughed Ned.

"Yes, he has," was the reply, "because he don't want to be laughed at. I believe he knows the exact location where that old ruin is said to be."

"I'll ask him about it," said Harry.

"If you do you won't get a civil answer. I can tell you what he thinks about the situa-

tion of the place. It's on the north side of the 'Big W,' off from the river a ways, in a canyon between two rocky ranges. I heard him talkin' about the 'Big W,' an' looked it up on the map. The river along there is full of falls and rapids, an' there ain't no landing towns for miles on the north side. It is an Indian reservation, on the north, an' game is plenty there, though I guess the country is mostly barren mountains an' hills. South is the Spokane grain country, as it is called."

"You've been dreaming, too, Jimmie," cried Harry. "Go along and solve one mystery before taking up another. Go on with Ned and whistle the flute soloist into camp."

Harry turned toward the boat and Ned and Jimmie moved into the forest which lifted from the rocky landscape.

"There's the elevation where Harry saw something shinin' in the moonlight," Jimmie said, after a short tramp. "We might go up there an' see if he left any tracks."

Accordingly the boys ascended the elevation and looked about. The moonlight was almost as bright as that of the sun, and the boys dropped down on the ground and began a careful inspection of the surface. Presently Jimmie whispered:

"Tracks!"

"Shoe or moccasin?" asked Ned.

"Shoe," was the reply.

Ned moved over to where the boy lay, his nose within two inches of the ground.

"Here," the lad said, pointing. "He walked off that way, into the thicket."

"There's a pretty good hiding place in there," Ned remarked.

The boys followed the tracks, now faint, now distinct, until they came to a line of shrubs under the advance guard of trees. There Ned stopped.

"What do you make of this?" he asked, pointing.

Jimmie looked down and gave a low whistle, which was instantly checked when Ned seized him by the arm.

"More Indian signs," the boy whispered.

"Boy Scout signs," corrected Ned.

"What do you make of it?" the boy asked, then.

"A Boy Scout of the Eagle Patrol has been here," Ned said, reading the signs scattered all about. "How he got here, or why he came, is more than I know. He has been here, however, and left a sort of postoffice for us."

"Signs in the grass," Jimmie said. "That means 'be careful,' doesn't it?"

"Yes, three growing sheafs in a row, tied

together at the top. That means 'take warning.' Here's the same warning in twigs, stones and trees. See, here are three holes in this tree, three white spots where the bark is cut away, one above another. That means 'be careful,' same as the others."

"I guess he was afraid we'd miss one," said Jimmie.

"And here's the postoffice," Ned went on, taking a folded sheet of paper from under a log.

Jimmie opened his eyes wide.

"Got a letter?" he asked.

"Can't you see it?"

"Well, but——"

Ned laughed.

"Look here," he said, "you see this oblong cut in the tree? Well, now observe the arrow pointing to the right. What does that mean?"

"I guess I ain't workin' in that degree," Jimmie admitted.

"It means that there is a letter hidden three feet away, in the direction indicated by the arrow. See, I followed the sign and got my letter."

"Gee!" cried the boy.

Ned unfolded the sheet and laughed.

"What does it say?" asked Jimmie.

Ned passed the sheet over to the boy and

waited for him to master the brief contents, which he was not long in doing.

"*'Better go back home,'* Jimmie read aloud. "He's got his nerve with him!"

"Neglected to sign his name in full," Ned observed. "Says he's a member of the Eagle Patrol, and stops there."

"Where does he say that?"

"Note the feather drawn across the bottom? Well, that's it."

"But you said he belonged to the Eagle Patrol before you saw this," ventured the boy, puzzled beyond measure by the queer happenings of the night.

Ned pointed to a feather wound in the warning signal in grass.

"*'Better go back home!'*" repeated the boy, in tones of indignation. "I suppose we've come all the way out here to be told what to do by a kid that's afraid to show his face!"

' Ned followed the footprints into the forest a few paces and turned back.

"He'll show himself when he wants to say anything more," he said.

"Huh!" Jimmie sputtered. "Why didn't he show himself tonight?"

Ned made no attempt to answer this pertinent question. He was sorely puzzled over the messages he had received. What was the

danger against which they were warned? Why should they turn back home and lose a perfectly innocent holiday? Why did the fellow who had warned them conceal himself from sight when almost within sound of their voices? These questions and a dozen more of similar import raced through the boy's brain.

"*'Better go back home!'*" Jimmie again muttered. "I suppose this marker wants to scare us away from something good!"

This was a new way to look at the matter, and Ned asked.

"Scare us away from what, for instance?"

"Blessed if I know!" was the reply. "I'm all muddled up. This is a great country for jarrin' folks. Here I got scrambled in the boat this forenoon, an' now I'm so muddled that I don't know which way is straight up. But where do you think that Eagle Patrol feller went? I'll bet a fish feather that he's hidin' around here now, laughin' at us. Here, you chump!" he called out, facing the rising ground in the forest, "why don't you come out an' show yourself?"

The boys listened a moment for a response to the call, but there was only the flutter of a sleepy bird in the tree under which they stood. Ned decided to try again.

"We got your letter!" he said.

In a moment the music came again, farther away this time, and Jimmie sat down on the ground at the foot of the tree and laughed. The mysterious musician was playing "Home, Sweet Home," probably as a reminder of the brief message contained in the letter!

"I'm goin' to take a run an' jump at him!" Jimmie cried, after he had had his laugh out, and after the notes of the melody had died away.

"No use," Ned advised. "You couldn't follow him long in there, even if you knew which way he was going."

"*Better go back home!*" "Jimmie grumbled. "I wish I had him by the neck!"

Ned walked back to the camp in a brown study. He could not understand this. Why should a person give such a warning and still refuse to assign any reason for so doing? Why should the musician follow them on from one point on the river to another? How was he traveling? Did the large rowboat belong to him, and was it now hidden in some narrow creek, waiting to move when they passed down?

The boy was now fully convinced that the flute player had nothing in common with the men who had attempted the capture of the boats. Also that he was not working with the

two villainous ex-servants of the Bosworth house. The fellow might be following them merely as a joke, or he might be hovering about to give a warning—in which case Ned thought he ought to have the moral courage to say what he had to say face to face.

“We’ll take a long run tomorrow,” he remarked to the boys, as they talked the matter over after his return to the boat, “and see what this mysterious chap does about that. He’ll have to go some if he keeps up with us.”

“What’s the odds that he doesn’t perform before us on his flute tomorrow night?” Jack asked, with a grin.

“About ten to one,” ventured Frank, “but it really depends on how far we’re going. Anyway, I’ll go you ten to one that he doesn’t show up tomorrow night.”

“Ten what to one?” asked Jimmie.

“Oh, anything, except money,” smiled Frank. “I don’t gamble.”

“Ten tricks at the wheel, then,” suggested Jack.

“You’re on!” said Frank, and the boys gravely shook hands.

“You’ve got your work cut out for you,” Jimmie said, glancing at Frank. “Jack’ll be the lazy man of this little old excursion for the next month.”

"How far tomorrow?" asked Harry, turning to Ned.

"We ought to stop at Marcus," was the reply, "and fill the tanks with gasoline. Then we ought to get around Kettle falls and cut loose from the line of the Great Northern railroad. I'm anxious to get beyond the sound of a steam whistle."

"You lose!" Jimmie exclaimed, speaking to Frank. "You lose that bet! See here," he added, taking out a map and turning his searchlight on it. "We're only a short distance from Sayward, where the copper mines are, and the railroad runs through there. Now, this funny man with the wind instrument can get there tonight, take an early train, and get to Marcus before we do. He can watch us fill our tanks and then shoot down the river in a skiff so as to toot-toot to us at night. You lose that bet, little man!"

"But you're supposing that this funny little man has nothing to do but to follow us and play sweet music and leave letters and Indian signs on trees," Frank said. "The bet is won right now!"

"That is just exactly the way I dope it out," Jimmie said. "That boy is with us for keeps. I don't know why, but he is!"

Harry stood guard that night. His four

companions occupied their hammocks on board the *Black Bear*, although Jimmie was determined at first to sleep on shore. The sentinel sat on the prow gazing down the river for a long time, enjoying the beauty of the scene. It was such a night, there in the great Northwest, as the city dweller rarely sees. The Columbia river lay like a ribbon of undulating silver in the soft light of the moon. There was a whispering in the trees, and one might well have imagined that the spirits which fable placed in the mysterious temple were abroad in the forest, telling in whispers of their joy of the moonlight.

Harry's vigil passed on monotonously until midnight, and then he heard the plash of an oar. At first it seemed that he must be mistaken, for the river was clear, over the rapids above and down the shining surface. Then, from a tiny creek, unobserved before, he saw the unpainted prow of a boat thrust forth.

Slowly the boat revealed itself until its length lay in the river, the bow pointing downward. There seemed to be two men in the boat, but Harry could not make sure that there were not three. At least there were two pairs of oars at work.

Harry, not wishing to take all the responsibility, shook Ned by the shoulder, and that

young man was almost instantly on his feet. Harry pointed down toward the boat and did not speak. Ned looked thoughtful.

The men in the boat might be employes of the copper mines below, or they might be fishermen, or prospectors, or huntsmen, but if they were, the boy thought, they would hardly leave the locality without inspecting the *Black Bear*. Boats of her build were not common in that country, and curiosity would naturally lead any honest visitors to inquiry and inspection.

The boat, held by the oars, remained almost stationary in the water for a moment and then slowly turned and started up stream in the direction of the *Black Bear*. Ned and Harry crouched down and remained perfectly quiet. The rowboat came on slowly, and three men could now be seen, two at the oars and one at the helm.

The boys got their weapons ready and waited. Much to their surprise, however, the rowboat made a wide detour and passed up stream, leaving a space half the width of the river between the two boats.

“They’ve got their nerve!” Jimmie whispered, as the distance between the two parties increased. “Look! Look!” he added, clutching at Ned’s sleeve.

Ned's eyes were already fixed on the face to which the boy was calling his attention. Up to this time it had remained concealed under a wide hat rim, but now the moonlight struck it fairly. It was the face of Akbar, and there was a look of triumph on the dusky features which made Jimmie's fingers tighten into the palms of his hands.

"The sneak!" the boy whispered. "Suppose we take a shot at him?"

But Ned could find no good reason for doing this, much as the proposition pleased him. The fellow had not interfered with them in any way, and, surely, the river was open to all.

The boat passed on up stream, with Akbar observing the motor boat very closely as he glided by. He seemed to believe the boys on board to be asleep, for the rowers paused at a motion of his hand, a hundred paces up stream, and the craft began to drift downward in a straight line with the *Black Bear*.

"Is that the rowboat we saw last night?" whispered Jimmie, as the two came closer together.

Ned shook his head. It was not the same boat, and this was an additional element of uneasiness. With two parties sneaking about, the chances for a troubled voyage down the river seemed excellent—three parties, in fact,

for there was the mysterious soloist to consider.

"They're goin' to board us!" Jimmie cried out in a moment, in a tone so loud that it must have been heard on the other boat.

Ned drew the boy down, half angrily, but the mischief had been done. The rowboat shot away down stream. Ned pushed the lever which brought the engine stroke up to the first spark and took the wheel. In a moment, with a snort from the siren, the motor boat was off in pursuit. The other boys awoke rubbing their eyes.

"What's doing?" demanded Jack, tumbling out of his swaying hammock. "What are you trying to do at this unholy hour?"

"We have met the enemy an' they—ducked!" grinned Jimmie.

The speedy motor boat gained fast on the other for a time, and then the latter, swinging off to one side, disappeared in the mouth of a small creek on the east side of the river. When the *Black Bear* came to the tiny opening the other boat was out of sight, and Ned uttered a sigh of disappointment.

"Go on in after them!" advised Jack.

"An' get grounded, an' also get our blocks knocked off by pirates hidin' behind trees!" said Jimmie.

Ned's inclination was to follow Jack's advice, but he knew that Jimmie's idea was the safest. They would stand no show at all in a fight in the thicket, and, besides, there really was nothing to fight about!

Sorely disappointed at the outcome of the adventure, Ned turned the prow of the *Black Bear* down stream, and the light of morning found them over the boundary line, at Marcus, where they procured more gasoline. The dangerous Kettle falls were passed that afternoon, and night found the boys miles away from any railroad line, far distant from any habitation or town. The wilds of the Columbia were open to them at last.

"Now," Jack said, as they prepared for sleep, "I'm going to stand guard tonight and make sure that I win that bet of Frank. We're a hundred miles from last night's camp, but I'll bet a cooky that we hear the flute soloist before morning."

CHAPTER IX.

THE LIGHTS IN THE SKY.

It was another brilliant night, and Ned remained with Jack until midnight, not a little curious as to the outcome of the wager.

"If he does come tonight," the boy said, "I shall think he is making a business of following us. Our previous camping places were not far apart, and so his showing up on both evenings may have been merely a matter of circumstance, but if he comes down here it will show me that he is interested in us in some way."

"I've got a hunch that he'll come," Jack said.

"But why—why——"

The sentence was never finished, for just then came the soft voice of the flute, flowing through the moonlight from no special location, seemingly, but pervading the scene with its melody.

"That gets me!" Jack cried.

Frank stirred uneasily in his sleep and Jimmie, who was still wide awake, gave him a jab in the ribs.

"Wake up an' pay your bet!" he cried.
"Here's the bogey man!"

“All right!” Frank grumbled. “I’ll pay! Say, if you fellows will go out there and catch him I’ll give you the largest spread we can get at Sherry’s when we go back to New York.”

The music stopped directly, and then Jimmie launched into a whistle which seemed almost an echo of the other’s performance. Almost immediately he was joined by the soloist, and the air was finished together.

Jimmie looked puzzled. His face was turned toward the spot from which the sounds had apparently come, with a wonder in his eyes.

“I’ve heard that gink somewhere,” he said, presently. “I’ve heard that song performed in just that way before. I believe I’d know that flute man if I could only get my lamps on him.”

“Jimmie,” said Frank, nudging Harry, “you are getting so you can’t open your mouth without dropping out a lot of slang. If you don’t quit it we’ll have to pass you up. Understand? We don’t stand for this rough Bowery lingo, this East Side patter. What?”

“I guess you can go some yourself,” grinned Jimmie. “I’d give two stories off the first sky-scraper I own, though, to be able to size up that gink with the flute.”

“Well, go on ashore and talk with him,” urged Jack.

The boy looked at Ned, as if asking permission to do so.

"It might be a good idea," Ned said.

Jimmie was off the *Black Bear* in a minute, splashing through the shallow water at the margin because he would not wait for the row-boat and also because he did not jump quite far enough. He was gone half an hour. When he returned his face looked more discouraged than before.

"Find him?" asked Jack.

"Nix," replied the boy, with a shake of the head. "There's not a trace of him in there. How did he get here, anyway?"

"That's what gets us all," Ned replied. "He hasn't got a motor boat, for we could hear the engine popping if he had, and he never could have rowed or floated here in the time we have made. He must have an airship!"

"That's no joke!" Frank replied. "Honest and true, I believe he has!"

"Then why haven't we seen it, or heard some of the people at the towns we have passed talking about it? An airship up here would attract more attention than a white elephant with red wings."

"Anyway, if he has an airship," protested Jack, "what's he chasing us up for? Do you

really think you've heard that whistle before, Jimmie?"

"Sure I do," was the reply.

"Think hard!" laughed Frank.

"Was it on the East Side?" asked Harry.

Jimmie turned his back on the group and climbed into his hammock.

"I hope he'll come back an' sweep some of the bees out of your garrets," he said, as he composed himself to slumber.

"It's a fright the way that boy talks slang," laughed Frank.

Jimmie only grunted, he was already half asleep, and through the shadowy dreams which came later on he seemed to hear that air again, and to see the face and figure of the performer. But, somehow, whenever, in these dreams, he endeavored to get close enough to identify the other a cloud came between them, and he awoke with a start only to sleep and dream again.

The remainder of the watch that night was uneventful. Nothing more was heard of the mysterious musician. In the morning the shore was searched for some sign of the presence of the stranger, but nothing was found.

"He might have left us another letter," Harry said.

"With his old '*Better go home*' in it, I suppose," scorned Jimmie.

“Anything at all!”

“It seems that he left nothing,” Ned decided, reluctantly, as he returned to the *Black Bear*. “Not even the print of a shoe!”

“I told you he was up in the air!” Frank declared. “That music never came from the ground.”

The boys set out on their journey early in the forenoon. For two golden weeks they loitered along the magnificent river. Now they camped beside a swift stream which poured through a rocky canyon. Now they slept in the boat, rocked in the hammocks, and looking out upon quiet pools where birds came to bathe in the morning, and where silvery fishes leaped up to meet the sunshine. Now they passed mountain spurs which crowded hard upon the valley of the stream, now they came to great dark forests where game abounded.

Many a night they built roaring fires on some rocky “bench” by the shore and slept beside them. Many a morning found them miles from camp, climbing, hunting, loitering, always filled with the wonder of the great Northwest.

Oh, those days and nights on the Columbia! They were to remember them all their lives. It was June, and the perfume of the time was over everything. It was vacation, and the elixir of youth was in their veins.

One afternoon Jack shot a deer, which he ought not to have done at that time of the year, and proposed a venison stew for supper. But when the meal was ready he turned away from the table.

"I can see his eyes looking at me out of the bowl," he said.

"I'm glad of that!" Ned said, heartily.

The stew was thrown out untasted. The boys were well versed in the lore of the Boy Scouts, which teaches that all wild creatures, except when actually needed for food, should be given the right to live. And, on another afternoon, a black bear came smelling cautiously about the camp. He was not a very ferocious looking creature, and Jimmie went out and tried to bribe him into companionship with a handful of loaf sugar.

"There's three Black Bears here now," Jimmie explained to the suspicious animal, "and you'll be the boss of the bunch if you come with us."

But bruin did not appear to like the looks of things, and the last the boys saw of him he was shambling off through the bushes with a grunt not unlike that with which a hog expresses disbelief in representations made.

The boats behaved admirably, and the drifting economized the gasoline so that the supply

taken on at Marcus would last for a month. They had plenty of tinned foods, and the river itself and the little creeks which emptied into it literally swarmed with fish, so the lads lived like epicures.

During all this time they had heard nothing of the mysterious soloist, and the river men who had been seen in the rowboats were well nigh forgotten. Ned at times had a subconscious impression that the East Indian and Saxby would be heard from in due season, but he did not permit himself to worry over the matter.

At the end of the two weeks they came to Spokane rapids, and knew that they were at the mouth of the Spokane river, with Metre rapids just below the junction. They remained here for a few days, making friends with people who passed them on the river, and preparing for the long stretch between that point and Wenatchee.

On the second day Ned and Frank, lying in comfort on the *Black Bear*, the "roof" of which was usually turned back on the steel supports, unless there was rain, saw a shadow pass over the water and looked quickly up, for there were no clouds in the sky, and the appearance of the shadow seemed unaccountable. In a second Frank gave a shout.

"There's the airship!" he said.

"Looks like it," Ned admitted.

"But I mean *our* airship!" Frank continued.

"Didn't know we had one," replied Ned. "When are you going to take possession of it?"

"Why," Frank answered, "that's the airship we've been looking for! The one our soloist travels in!"

Ned laughed and turned away.

"Strange we never caught sight of him before, then," he said.

The airship sailed over the *Black Bear*, and seemed for an instant to hover there, then passed on toward Spokane. But as the great planes grew smaller in the distance the clear notes of a fife came down with the sunshine!

"There's your old bandwagon!" Frank laughed. "There's the ship the soloist has been traveling in! Now, I want to know what he means by it. He must be on a vacation, too, riding in an aeroplane instead of a motor boat."

Ned was thinking along the same line, but was asking himself the question as to where the soloist had put in the time during the two weeks they had been sauntering down to Spokane Junction.

"If he's keeping watch over us," he said, with a smile, "he's been off duty for about fourteen days."

"Well, he seems to be on the job now, all right," Frank said.

"I think," Ned answered, thoughtfully, that I ought to run up to Spokane and see who that young man is. If he lands there with his aeroplane, everybody in the valley will know all about him in no time, and he certainly must land somewhere to get gasoline for his motor."

"Suppose we run up in the *Black Bear*?"

Ned laughed and took out a pocket map.

"We are now about one hundred miles from Spokane," he said, looking the map over, "and in that distance the river has a fall of about twelve hundred feet, or an average of twelve feet to the mile. I guess we won't try to go up there in the boat."

"But we might make it," urged Frank. "You know we made the river from Nelson to the Columbia, around Upper and Lower Bennington falls. The maps do not show that there is any boat route along that river."

"We had only a short distance to go there," Ned replied, "and, besides, we were rather enjoying the novelty of taking our new boat to pieces and putting it together again. I think we've had enough of that."

"Then how are you going to get to Spokane?"

"We have plenty of time, and I thought we might work up as far as possible without too much carrying, and then go on in a canoe."

The boys studied over the situation for a long time, and Frank was anxious to visit Spokane, so he encouraged the expressed idea, but Ned finally decided to go on down the river and let the soloist take his own time about making himself known.

"He'll be sure to do it," Jimmie said, when the case was stated to the other boys on their return to camp. "I believe he's here to keep a kind of watch over us!"

"I guess we don't need any chaperon," grunted Jack.

"Well, he's here to make friends with us before we leave the country," insisted the little fellow. "I've heard that whistle in little old New York, and I know it. There is an Eagle Patrol there, you know, and this chap comes from that."

"Perhaps he's after the ruined temple!" said Jack, nudging Frank.

Frank grinned, but made no reply, and Jimmie grinned, too, because he knew that Jack, in spite of his jokes about it, believed as

thoroughly in the story of the early trip of the East Indians as Frank pretended to.

So the prow of the motor boat was turned down stream the next morning. From this point on the boys were fronted by new conditions. Nearly all the way from Nelson, B. C., to Marcus, Wash., they had been within sound of a locomotive whistle. From Marcus to the Spokane river they had passed through a valley which is sure to become a great orchard and grain producer in time.

This, however, is probably true only of the valley on the east side of the river. Between the Columbia and the Huckleberry mountains the land is fertile and irrigation is easily brought about where needed. To the west of the river lies the Colville Indian reservation.

The valley here is much narrower than on the east side of the stream, and there are very few towns on that side. In the interior are some mines, and the railroads are pointing northward. Few streams rush down from the highland to the Columbia, and the forests of larch, spruce and cedar are thick and hard to penetrate.

Below Spokane junction the Columbia valley, on the south, is known as a part of the great Spokane grain and orchard belt. The general course of the stream is west, though it

flows at times to all points of the compass. At the foot of the Buckhorn mountains, something over two hundred miles from the Spokane, it turns south again and waters the Wenatchee country.

But while the valley of the Columbia, on the south, possesses great possibilities for the future, that on the north is wild and rugged, broken with mountains and not at present suitable for crop growing. There are numerous towns along the river, on the south side, between the Spokane and the Buckhorn mountains, but none on the north.

The Columbia takes a long drop from the interior plateau in this stretch, and is therefore turbulent and wayward. The maps show a dozen important falls and rapids between the Spokane and the Buckhorns, but the boys found more than that. The *Black Bear* was taken to pieces several times, but the boys did not grumble over the delays or the portages.

In fact, the party loitered along, just about as it had done above the Spokane. The boat was three weeks in making the first hundred miles. The lads fished and tramped over the hills and slept in the sun. The daily temperature stood at about 70 degrees, and there were few rainy days, the average of sunny days in that country being twenty-two to the month.

One evening, an hour or more after they had passed a little settlement on the south side of the river, known as Alameda, they drew the *Black Bear* up the north bank at the head of a long run of rapids which would necessitate the taking of the boat to pieces before continuing the journey.

Jimmie sighed at the prospect ahead.

"If it wasn't for that old engine," he growled, "I could carry the boat around the bloomin' falls alone! If that aeroplane fellow is ever comin' I wish he'd drop down now an' lift this *Black Bear* down the river a few miles."

"We've lost the soloist!" Frank declared.

"No, sir," Jimmie insisted. "He'll come an' shake hands before he leaves the country. I'll bet he's been followin' us right along."

"We should have seen him," Frank suggested.

"You ask Ned," the boy cried, "if they don't paint aeroplanes so they can't be seen at 4,000 feet, even on a clear day!"

Frank grinned at the enthusiasm of the little lad and turned to Ned for an explanation.

"I have heard that they do," Ned replied. "They have a gray aeroplane paint which makes the planes invisible at 4,000 feet or

more. The army people invented that sort of disguise."

"But the paint wouldn't make the motors run still," Frank insisted. "We could have heard motors, anyway, if this airship had been about."

"Got you again!" Jimmie shouted. "The army people have invented an aluminum motor which runs without noise. You wait until we get into a war, and you'll have bombs fallin' out of ships that look just like the blue sky!"

"All right," Frank replied, rather crossly, "I'll take your word for it. But I don't expect to meet this mysterious stranger, just the same."

After supper Frank, Jack and Harry went to bed early in a great bed of spruce boughs which they had collected and covered with blankets, leaving Ned and Jimmie sitting alone by the embers of the fire. It was now middle July, and rather hot for that district. There was a slice of a moon low in the west, but there would be only the stars after eleven o'clock.

Sitting there in the dim light the boys heard deer and other wild creatures come down to the river to drink. A line of hills on the south side showed clear and white under the light of the moon, and the din of the rapids came up like a slow, monotonous song.

"It beats the Great White Way," Ned said, drawing a long breath. "It beats anything in the world!"

"You've got it right," declared Jimmie. "Do you hear the music in the falls?"

"In the falls?" repeated Ned. "Listen!"

"That's our fife player!" cried the little fellow, "and there, over the hills on the other bank, are the lights of an aeroplane."

CHAPTER X.

AN EAGLE TO THE RESCUE.

It was true enough!

The lights over the hills on the south bank could be nothing else. They lifted and lowered, darting hither and thither like fireflies sporting in the night.

"Do you think the music comes from there?" asked Jimmie.

"It certainly does."

"But that is a long way off."

"Yes, but there are no obstructions in the air between us and the aeroplane," said Ned. "And the wind is blowing from that direction, what little there is."

The aeroplane seemed to lower as it approached. Presently its great planes could be seen quite plainly, even in the uncertain light.

"He's comin' here!" Jimmie cried, dancing about. "I knew he'd be neighborly an' make a call!"

The music stopped in a moment, but the airship came on, sweeping close to the water of the river when it came to it. Then it soared aloft again, noiselessly, almost.

"Come again; Gone again!" laughed Jimmie.

The aeroplane turned to the west and proceeded in the direction of the Buckhorn mountains, and was soon lost to sight. Jimmie followed it with his eyes as long as possible and then threw himself down with a sign of disappointment. He had hoped much from the appearance of the great plane.

"*Better go home!*" he said, whimsically, repeating the language of the letter. "We don't care about your company, anyway!"

Ned made no reply. His thoughts were on the possibility of his ever discovering the motive for the strange conduct of the person in the aeroplane.

Jimmie arose, after a short time, and strolled off into the straggling forest. The valley of the Columbia is very narrow, on the north, at the point where the boys encamped, the hills with their scanty covering of trees coming close to the water's edge, so the boy did not walk very far before stopping at a little elevation in the surface of the earth.

Ned saw him standing there, looking back, and for a moment paid no further attention to him. But there was an indefinable something pulling at the back of the boy's brain which gave a sense of peril, and he arose to his feet

and looked forward to the spot where he had last seen the boy.

Jimmie was not there, and Ned stepped along to look for him. When he came to the foot of the elevation he saw the lad lying, face down, on the ground.

“Jimmie!” he cried. “What’s the trouble? Get up!”

The boy did not move, and Ned bent down over him. As he did so a bullet sang past his ear, and the next instant the report of a revolver cut the air. It was dim in the forest, even though the trees were not thick, and Ned could see no indications of the person who had fired the shot.

He, however, was standing in the moonlight, in plain view of the attacking party, and he knew that his only hope of safety lay in getting back to the boat.

There was a space under the bank, when the river was not up, which would serve as a protection if he could only get to it. But he could not leave Jimmie there to be slaughtered. if he were not already dead.

How the boy had been injured he did not know, and there was no time in which to settle the point. There had been no shooting, however, so, Ned reasoned, he must have been

struck down by some one wielding a club or hurling stones.

This conclusion meant, if correct, that the person who had attacked the boy must have been close at hand—might at that moment be lurking within a yard of the spot—although the shot had come from a distance, as Ned knew by hearing the hum of the bullet before the sound of the explosion reached his ears. He dropped to his knees and lifted the senseless little chap in his arms.

“Jimmie!” he called, softly.

There was no answer, and the boy’s head rolled limply in Ned’s arm.

While Ned crouched there the noise of the breaking of a twig not far off came to his ears with the distinctness, almost, of a pistol shot.

Smiling, even at that trying time, at the thought of permitting his nerves to race away in that manner, Ned drew his automatic and listened.

Some one was advancing upon him. There could be no doubt of that. The footsteps came on slowly, cautiously. Wondering why, and trying to find a reason for it, Ned’s brain acted quickly, and he saw that the intruder doubtless believed that he had killed his opponent, or seriously wounded him, with that one shot.

The fellow was so near now that Ned did not

dare rise to his feet. Such a step, he believed, would lead to instant destruction.

Alone and unencumbered, he might have crept away a few paces and made a dash for the shore, but with Jimmie lying helpless in his arms this was not to be thought of. He must find some other way.

It seemed to Ned that the shot must have awakened the sleeping boys. Then he remembered that shooting had been so common a thing about the camps that the boys, even if awakened, would not be apt to take alarm.

Directly the man who was advancing upon him came to a point where his figure was sharply outlined against a piece of sky which the moon was painting with light. It was a heavy, ungainly figure, but unquestionably the figure of a strong man.

The face, what the boy could see of it, was heavy, nearly covered with a growth of untrimmed whiskers, and repulsive in the extreme. Ned could not find the heart to shoot the fellow down without warning, though the shot just fired revealed the vicious spirit of the man.

When the man came within striking distance Ned arose to his feet, his automatic leveled at the evil eyes which looked out of the tangle of hair on the repulsive face.

“Stop!” he cried. “Up with your hands!”

With a grunt like that of a wild beast the fellow obeyed.

“What are you doing here?” asked the boy then.

The reply came in words which Ned did not understand.

Then the situation grew a new peril for the boy, for some clumsy object came whirling out of the darkness and struck him on the right shoulder. The automatic dropped to the ground and the man who had been threatened with it sprang forward.

Then came a second interruption in the form of a pistol shot from the camp. The sleepers were up and doing!

The burly figure in front of Ned staggered for an instant, then turned and ran. The three boys surged forward, but Ned called to them to get back to the *Black Bear* and put up the panels.

Three shots now came from the line of trees, but the bullets went wide of their mark, and Ned lifted the body of Jimmie and started toward the shore.

There now seemed to be half a dozen men in the attacking party, and all were evidently well armed, for the shots came fast. A bullet clipped a lock of hair from Jimmie’s head as

he was carried along, and Ned felt a sharp sting in his wounded shoulder.

In a moment two of the boys turned back from the boat, leaving Harry to put up the panels, and began firing in the direction of the spiteful bursts of fire they saw under the trees.

The attacking party seemed to be falling back; reports now came from a greater distance, and the firing soon ceased entirely.

Fearful that the silence was deceptive, the boys crouched under the river bank and waited while Harry and Frank made a closed, almost bullet-proof, room of the interior of the *Black Bear* by putting up the panels.

These panels were of thin wooden slices, crossed in grain, but in the center of each was a thin steel plate. At a reasonable distance those on the inside would be fully protected from bullets of an ordinary size fired from the outside.

At last all the panels were in place and Jimmie was carried on board. He moved his right hand as he was laid down and motioned toward his head.

Then Ned saw that a wound had been inflicted with a club or some blunt weapon, and that the bruising of the flesh by the blow had in a measure prevented loss of blood.

“Put over to the other shore,” Ned ordered,

as he stooped over the boy. "We must see if we can find a surgeon at that town up the river."

"I wouldn't run away," Jack exclaimed hotly. "I'd stay right here and fight."

"That's me!" Harry cut in.

"I admire your courage, but think little of your judgment," Ned replied. "We can attend to those fellows after we know whether we can save the little fellow's life or not."

"Why, I thought he'd just got a little tunk on the head!" apologized Jack.

"I thought so too," Harry hastened to say.

The *Black Bear*, with the *Wolf* trailing behind, was turned up stream, and soon the few lights of Alameda were seen. Alameda is a very small river town, not far below Equilibrium rapids and not far above Roosevelt rapids.

As Ned, Frank and Jack stepped out of the boat in which they had made the shore they were met by half a dozen men who regarded them with inquiring glances in which suspicion seemed to be quite a factor.

"Is there a surgeon here?" asked Ned.

The men addressed stood stolidly facing the boys for a moment, then turned and began conversing with each other in low tones. Enraged

at the cool impertinence of the fellows, Ned repeated his question.

Then one of the men, a heavy, broad-shouldered fellow with a rather clean-cut face and frank eyes, stepped forward.

"Where are you hurt?" he asked.

"The wounded boy is in the boat," Ned answered. "If you can point the way to a surgeon I'll be grateful."

One of the men stepped forward and said something to the man which Ned could not hear. Then he asked:

"Where did you get that?"

The man pointed to Ned's right arm, which the boy was holding up by a clutch on the wrist, and which, by the way, was throbbing with pain.

Ned looked at the shoulder and was surprised to see that it was red with blood.

"I knew I had been struck with a rock, or something of the kind," Ned said, then, with a poor attempt at a smile, "but I did not know that I had been shot."

"Now you're getting down to the point," the other said. "Who did that shooting?"

"We did some of it, but we were attacked and the boy in the boat knocked unconscious before we fired a shot," Jack broke in angrily. "Say, what's the matter with you people?" he

added. "Can't you point the way to the doctor's office?"

"Keep cool, young feller," another of the group said. "We mean to find out about this before listenin' to any cock-and-bull stories. Did you fellows, any of you, come in the air-ship?"

Ned shook his head.

"We came in the motor boat," he said. "What has been going on here that you should be so suspicious?"

"Murder and robbery has been going on!" shouted a man at the back of the group, "and we've got to know——"

Then they advanced and grouped about the boys until they were virtually prisoners in the center of a slowly closing circle of excited and desperate-looking frontiersmen. Jack and Frank drew closer to Ned and dropped their hands to their weapons.

"You're the fellers we want!" one of the circle shouted, shaking a brawny fist almost in Jack's face. "You'll get a doctor here that'll fix you up for keeps!"

Jack might have resented this insult, in fact, was about to draw his automatic, when the sound of running footsteps came down the street. The men turned and whispered as they watched the swiftly approaching figure.

The newcomer, rosy-faced, clear-eyed, blonde, a boy of perhaps seventeen, dressed in much better style than any of those about him, elbowed his way through the crowd about the boys and stood, wide-eyed, looking at Ned.

By this time Ned was faint from pain and loss of blood. His head seemed to be swimming in a circular sea which darted flashes of fire from every crested wave. He saw the stranger regarding him curiously, but did not see the look of recognition in his eyes.

Only for the quick support of Frank and Jack, he would have fallen to the ground. The newcomer pushed the men away, with the command that the boy be given air, and took his place by Ned's side. 🍁

Jack and Frank looked on in amazement, thankful for the assistance which had come at that critical moment, still bewildered at the wonder of it.

The frontiersmen, momentarily checked by the authoritative actions of the boy, now came closer and began asking questions, mixing their interrogations with accusations and reproaches, couched in no mild words.

"Look here, fellows," the boy said to them, presently, "I know this party. These boys are all right. The wounded boy is Ned Nestor. You've heard of him, I take it. I don't know

these other boys, but they're o. k. if they're with Ned."

"Well," Jack cried, catching the stranger's hand, "I don't know you, but you've done a good job here!"

The men whispered together a moment and then the one who had spoken first stepped forward.

"It's all right if you say you know them, Lew," he said, "but it looks suspicious to us, their coming up here in a boat which looks like the one that lugged off the stolen stuff, one of them wounded from a bullet. Besides, there was shooting down the river, and the chances are that our men attacked them. The men who went after the murderers are still out there somewhere."

"Yes, I know," the boy addressed as Lew said, "but I tell you that I know this party. I read in the papers about their leaving New York a couple of months ago. They're on a motor-boat trip down the Columbia."

Ned now leaned forward and laid a hand on the boy's shoulder. There was a faint smile on his face, but his hand shook.

"You're Lewis Wagoner?" he asked. "I didn't know who it was when I heard your voice, but I know now."

"You've guessed it!" laughed Lewis. "But

how did you come to get into such a scrape here?"

Jack and Frank did not wait for Ned to reply, but began at the attack on Jimmie and related the events of the evening up to that time, both talking together at times, so eager were they to get the exact situation into the dull heads of the questioners and get information as to the whereabouts of the doctor.

The man who had first addressed the boys now stepped up to Ned and extended his hand, the others observing his action with evident approval.

"I'm sorry we suspected you boys of the crimes that have been committed here tonight," he said. "If Lewis Wagoner knows you, why, there's nothing more to say. We all work for his father, and all think a lot of the boy."

Laughingly, Lewis extended his right hand, palm up, the thumb and little finger crossed, the three remaining fingers straight out. Then he raised the hand to his forehead in full salute.

"What Patrol?" asked Jack.

"The Eagle, New York," was the astonishing reply.

"So you're all Boy Scouts!" laughed the man who seemed to be the leader of the group. "Well, boys, we may as well take up the search

for the murderers again. I reckon Lew can entertain these fellows."

"New York is where I knew Ned Nestor," Lewis said. "I've been with him on little trips up the Hudson. Now I'm marooned out here, and I guess there'll never be any more Hudson river for me!"

"We can talk this over at another time," Ned replied, taking the boy by the hand again, "but now we must find a doctor and take him to Jimmie."

"Jimmie McGraw?" asked Lewis.

"The same," replied Frank. "He got a bump on the head, and is lying unconscious in the boat."

"And these chaps have been keeping you standing here!" exclaimed Lewis, indignantly. "Mr. Shelby, will you go after the doctor?"

"Sure!" was the reply. "Be glad to. Do all we can for any friend of yours. You can't blame us for being watchful, can you, after what's taken place here?"

"Sure not," Lewis replied. "We'll go back to the boat now, and you send the doctor down. Ned will need fixing up a little, too, I take it. And while there I'll explain why you boys were suspected of being river pirates."

CHAPTER XI.

THE BLACK BEAR SCENTS A PROWLER.

The lad whose opportune arrival had rescued the boys from an embarrassing situation entered the *Black Bear* with many exclamations of wonder and delight at the superbly finished and furnished interior. He had examined many motor boats built expressly for long river trips, but had never come upon anything like this.

However, little time was lost in examining the boat, for Jimmie lay upon a bunk breathing heavily and plainly in need of medical assistance. While the boys worked over him, doing all they could for his relief, Ned managed to wash his own wound and tie it up roughly. He found that the bones were not broken, but that the muscles were bruised, and that the bullet had made a bad flesh wound.

"I'll be as fit as a fiddle in a few days," he said, in answer to Jack's anxious inquiries. "We can lay up for a week and hunt the ruffians who attacked us."

"They are a bad lot," Lewis began, but at that instant the doctor arrived and made a close examination of the unconscious boy. The

others gathered around, almost afraid to ask the truth regarding the injury.

"Well," said the doctor, a rough-and-ready man who handled irrigation deals as well as treated the sick, "the kid will come out of this before long, and be right as a book. He got a bad knock-out but there is no serious injury. The bruise where the blow fell will need caring for, and that is about all."

Then the man of pills looked at Ned's arm and promptly advised him to go to bed.

"You've got a bad, though not fatal wound," he explained, "and you'll get well all the quicker for resting up. You have lost a lot of blood."

"I should think so!" Jack cried out. "He came near dropping while in the village."

The doctor remained only a short time, as he was interested in the capture of the men who had made a raid on the town earlier in the evening.

Soon after his departure Jimmie opened his eyes and looked about, a sheepish grin on his freckled face.

"Got me crust busted, didn't I?" he asked.

"You bet you did!" answered Frank. "Who did it?"

"Search me," replied the boy, wearily. "I

didn't see no one until I got this dip on the dome!"

"He'll come out o. k.," laughed Lewis. "That slang sounds like Rivington street!"

"Hello, Lew!" Jimmie cried, opening his eyes at sound of the voice. "Did you come in the airship?"

"No such luck as that," Lew replied. "I came in the choo-choos to Spokane, and then down the river, walking about half the way."

"On the water?" queried Jimmie, with the old humor flashing in his eyes.

"Around the water," Lewis replied. "Around the rapids and things."

"What is it about that airship?" Jack asked presently. Every person about here seems to know all about it."

"No one knows anything about it," Lewis answered. "We all saw it yesterday and today, but that is all—we just saw it."

"Didn't land?"

"No; that is, no one saw it drop to the surface, but there are those who insist that the men who murdered Silcox and robbed his safe came from that same airship."

"So there really was a murder?" asked Frank. "I thought those chaps were giving us a brace about that."

"Yes; the keeper of the store was shot while

defending his property. The men got off without being seen, and with \$20,000 in cash which they took from the safe."

"And they thought we were the ones? Naturally," mused Ned. "Well, there must have been some shooting, for one of the men up there referred to something of that kind."

"Well, Silcox fired a couple of times, and we think wounded one of the robbers, for we found blood outside. It was late in the afternoon, and there was no one in the store but Silcox, and little noise was made. The first we knew there was the shooting, and then two men dashed toward the river. No one saw their faces, or much of their figures, as far as that goes. They crossed the river in a rowboat, drifting down with the strong current, and that is all we know about it."

"And the men who are searching for them are still out?"

"Yes." Perhaps they mistook you boys for the robbers."

"No," Ned answered, "they could not have done that. They wouldn't have gone at it in that way. I think the men who attacked Jimmie wanted to take him prisoner. You see, we've got rather a duck of a motor boat here, to say nothing of the tender, and there's some one

on the river who wants it. They tried to get it when we first started out."

"I don't wonder they want the boats," Lewis laughed. "I'd like them myself."

"With one of us captured, I think they would have rushed the camp and driven the others off or shot us," Ned went on. "It is probable, from their actions, that they do not know how to run the boat, which explains why they wanted Jimmie."

"If there's a hot spot on earth," grinned Jack, "we're sure to get into the center of it. Say," he went on, "you live here, don't you?"

"Just at present father is trying to get rich in that grain country over in the south. I'm going back to New York this fall."

"What do you know about the ruined temple down the river?" asked Frank.

Lewis dropped back in his chair and laughed such an amused, jolly laugh that the others joined in.

"Ho, ho!" he said directly. "So you're after the East Indian's gold!"

"I told you so!" Frank observed, turning to Jack. "Everybody up here seems to know something about the hidden temple."

"Everybody hereabouts has heard something about it," Lewis interrupted, "but no one has ever succeeded in finding it. About a

year ago a couple of men came here looking for it."

"And there'll be more here," Jack laughed. "A couple of thieves left New York just about the time we did!"

"Perhaps the man in the airship is after it, too," suggested Lewis.

"Say," Frank broke in, a sudden thought making his eyes shine, "you say you belong to the Eagle Patrol?"

"Exactly."

"Well, have you got a musical crank in your Patrol who thinks he can run an airship?"

Lewis looked thoughtful for a minute.

"We've got a musically inclined boy who is inventing aeroplanes," he finally replied. "He has a new model every time I see him. The last time I met the boy he had found a man to build one of his aluminum contraptions."

"How long ago was that?"

"Oh, a year, perhaps."

"What kind of an aeroplane was he thinking of building?"

"One with a noiseless motor; one with aeroplane paint which would, he said, make it invisible at a distance of 4,000 feet, even on a bright day."

"What's his notion?"

"He says that all future battles will be fought in the air."

"Now, what's his name?"

"Leroy, Sam Leroy—a broth of a kid he is."

"Then why didn't he pay you a visit when he passed yesterday?" asked Jack.

"Pay me a visit?" repeated the other.

"Sure, that was Leroy in that airship."

"It doesn't seem possible."

Then Lewis was told of the signs and the letter left by the boy who had played the flute so divinely and drifted off toward Spokane in an aeroplane.

Lewis clapped his hands enthusiastically.

"Then Leroy's got it at last!" he cried. "He's got his aeroplane perfected. Oh, that's him all right!" he went on. "He's the best flute player in New York."

"And belongs to the Eagle Patrol?"

"Yes."

"Then what is he dodging about here for?" demanded Jack. "He seems to know that we are Boy Scouts, for he left signals and a letter for us. Why doesn't he come down for a talk?"

"Perhaps he wants to beat you to the ruined temple!" suggested Lewis.

"But he isn't supposed to know anything about the ruined temple," Jack put in. "We

don't know anything about it, either; only Frank thinks he can find it and lug home a carload of pieces of eight, whatever they are."

"You bet I can find it!" Frank insisted.

"I'd like to go with you," Lewis said, then. "You'll have a gay time, whether you find the temple or not."

"That is what we're out for," Ned remarked. "We came out to live in a motor boat on the Columbia, but ever since the start it has seemed to me, from the conversation on board, that we were going after a pirate treasure."

"You really don't believe in the hidden temple?" asked Lewis.

"Of course not."

"Well, there's something over in there," the boy continued. "The men who came here half a century ago say that they found traces of visitors who used material in their boats which never grew in this country, and there is said to be a mound, far down the stream, which yields up trinkets and vessels never known to the Indians. There is some reason for believing that there is really something in the ruined temple story," he continued, "still no one has succeeded in locating it."

"That gink in the aeroplane told us to go back home!" Jimmie awoke to say, and then dropped off into a doze again.

“That’s Leroy!” Lewis cried. “Oh, just wait until I get my hands on the boy. I’ll trim him!”

“Do you think he’s looking for the temple?” asked Jack, carelessly.

“He may be; or he may be testing his machine for long distance runs.”

“I just believe he heard about our trip,” Frank mused, “and thought he’d go us one better in an airship. I’d like to know where he is tonight.”

“He was here today.”

“Yes, we saw him then; but he’s likely to go off again and not show up for two weeks.”

Jack, who was now standing by an open panel, looked back into the room and beckoned to Lewis. When the latter approached the opening he in turn motioned to the other boys to get closer.

“What do you make of that?”

He asked the question in a low tone, for just outside, within twenty yards of the *Black Bear*, sailing calmly eastward, was the aeroplane, its gray planes glittering in the last light of the moon. From where the boys stood they could see the driver quite distinctly. He was not looking down, so they could not distinguish his features.

“Call him!” suggested Frank.

"Leroy!" yelled Lewis.

There was no answer. Instead the motors were thrown into high speed, and the airship dashed upward and northward like a rocket.

"That's a queer caper!" Lewis exclaimed, chagrined and half angry at the discourteous action of the boy in the aeroplane. "He certainly heard me."

"To be sure he did," Jack remarked, "but I wasn't thinking of his impudence, I was wondering how he ever got up a machine that makes no noise to speak of. Why, he could scoot all around a military camp in that airship and never be detected."

"He's certainly been shooting around us," Frank said. "Mighty strange he doesn't land and give an account of himself—if it is Sam Leroy."

"I don't think there's any doubt about that," Lewis explained. "Leroy is a crank on aeroplanes, and he is also a flute soloist. I reckon he's doing this to have a good story to tell about you boys when you all get back to New York."

"Something more than that," Jack argued, suspiciously. "He's got a motive in what he's doing. You'll see, in time!"

Lewis remained on the *Black Bear* until a late hour and then went home, promising to return in the morning. Jimmie improved so

rapidly that it was not necessary for any one to watch with him during the remainder of the night, and Ned declared that he could sleep like a top, in spite of his wounds, so by one o'clock the lights were out and the boys were asleep.

The fact that the boat lay within a few feet of the little pier at the foot of the one business street of Alameda, and the further fact that the men of the town were up and about, searching the river and the valley on both sides of it for the murderers of the merchant, caused the boys to retire without leaving a guard, a thing they had not done before for a long time.

Jack slept lightly, however, for his mind was troubled. With Ned and Jimmie on the invalid list, he knew that slow progress would now be made. In fact it had already been proposed to tie up there for a week.

This was not at all in accordance with the notions of the boy. As the reader already understands, Jack really had strong belief in the story of the ruined temple. As Jimmie had explained, the boy laughed at Frank for his optimistic opinions on the subject more to keep it under discussion than for any other reason.

Jack knew that neither Scoby nor Akbar possessed the old book describing the location

of the old temple. He knew that neither one of the unfaithful servants held the map pointing the way to the lonely locality described in the book. He knew positively that they had nothing save hearsay to guide them.

He knew that the two were all at sea in their quest *because he, himself, had the precious book in his possession!*

On the very day before the search of Mr. Bosworth's den, Jack had taken the book to his room for the purpose of studying out the suggested route to the canyon where the ruined temple was supposed to be. That was the reason why the exhaustive search made by Saxby had not proved successful.

Afterwards, when discussing the matter with Nestor and his father, he had not mentioned having the book because he did not care at that time to admit his great interest in the subject. Besides, if no one knew that he had the book, the chances of his being molested by those seeking it would be lessened.

He did not believe, of course, that Ned or his father, or any of the boys belonging to the party, would knowingly reveal his secret, still, he could not tell what slip of the tongue might place the information in the possession of the villainous servants.

Later on, when the existence of the mysteri-

ous temple became merely a joke with the boys, he did not care to show just what his feelings in the matter were. So he became the leading scoffer and kept the matter going as a joke.

His idea, on this restless night, was to get to the vicinity of the old temple—he was certain in his own mind that there was a temple!—as soon as possible and make investigation without the knowledge of his chums. If he found what he sought, the victory would be doubly sweet because of his winning it alone; if, however, he never found the location described or the temple, then there would be no one to laugh at him for his credulity and misplaced industry.

So he was restive under the delay. It had been a long time since he had heard from Scoby or Akbar, yet he was certain that they had not given up the hunt. He was positive that they were steadily drawing nearer to the *Black Bear* as the *Black Bear* drew nearer to the mysterious canyon he sought.

There was, indeed, a suspicion in the mind of the lad that both Saxby and Akbar suspected his possession of the book and the map. Saxby had often talked, in a seemingly careless way, with him about the hidden treasure, and knew that he, Jack, had read the book and was greatly interested in it.

Saxby would naturally reason that if the book was not in the den on that night then it must be in one of two places—in the possession of Jack or Akbar. Akbar, too, knew, in a general way, of his, Jack's, reading the book, and he would not be long in reaching the conclusion that if Saxby did not have the book Jack must have it.

Jack did not doubt that Saxby and Akbar had been playing the sleuth on each other ever since that night, and he decided in his own mind that by this time Akbar had reached the conclusion that Saxby did not have the book or the map. It would be perfectly easy for Akbar to reach such a conclusion, for, with them in his possession, Saxby would have pointed straight for the location described. This he, evidently, had not done.

So, Jack figured, both Saxby and Akbar were not far away at that time. Blind luck might lead them to the temple and the treasure. Jack was not so much interested in the pieces of eight Jimmie laughed about as he was about the old temple.

Besides, there were the men who attacked the merchant, and later assaulted Jimmie. They, too, might be in quest of the thing he, himself, was in search of.

With this burden on his mind Jack, as has

been said, slept lightly on that night. The day before he had promised himself that he would soon reach the point in the river from which the craigs he sought would be in sight. He had not figured out the details of his trip to the canyon—just how he was to elude the others and proceed to the canyon alone—but he had not imagined that part of the affair as difficult.

But now the events of the evening had necessitated a tie-up, and Jack was not at all pleased with the idea, though he did not openly express his disgust at the turn things were taking. When he opened his eyes, about three o'clock in the morning, he was actually wondering if it would not be possible for him to take the little boat and some provisions and go on down the river alone!

Of course he would leave a note for the boys, saying that he had gone off into the hills for a little quiet hunting, so they would not be worried over his disappearance. Then he could find the places described in the book and pointed out on the map and set about his search.

What a triumph it would be if he could only discover the temple, perhaps grown over with vines and brambles, fallen into decay as to wall and tower, but still showing the handiwork of

that old Akbar who had toiled up the wide Columbia to hide his treasure! How he would laugh at the others! Of course there would be no pieces of eight, for they were Spanish coins, but there would be gold!

While, half awake, the boy dreamed of the success of his secret plans, there came a thud at the stern of the *Black Bear*, and then the boat swayed slightly, as if under a heavy weight. In a moment there came a sound of whispering voices.

Jack slipped softly out of his hammock, crouched low, and moved toward the stern. The side panels were up, shutting out the night, but the panels at the prow and stern were open from the top to within a few inches of the floor.

As the boy looked out of the opening, two figures stood outlined against the starlit sky.

CHAPTER XII.

AKBAR PRESENTS HIMSELF.

Jack's first impulse was to awaken Frank or Harry, but a little reflection convinced him that the noises consequent on the rousing from slumber of two such sleepy heads as they were would be sure to frighten the intruders away.

His idea was to at least ascertain who the nocturnal visitors were, and to capture one or both, if that were possible. So he reached for his automatic and remained quiet, watching and listening.

The two figures standing between the boy and the patch of dim light to the north seemed to be those of men abnormally tall and slender. Their faces were turned toward the interior, but he could not distinguish the features of either.

Directly Ned stirred restlessly in his sleep and uttered a faint moan. Then the intruders drew back on the rim of the deck beyond the panels and crouched lower.

When Ned quieted down again they returned to the opening and one of them put his head inside. The other figure disappeared from view.

"The nerve of him!" Jack thought.

There was only the light of the stars, as has been said, but Jack sensed something familiar in the long, lithe figure bending over the edges of the panels and peering inside. The turning of the head, the sinister undulations of the long neck, the cautiously lifted hand, spoke to him of Akbar!

"I guess he's come at last!" the boy thought. "Now, I wonder who that other gink outside is? If Ned was awake I wonder what he'd tell me to do! I feel like taking a shot at the brute!"

Then something unexpected happened. A click of metal at the prow attracted Jack's attention, and he turned his head quickly to see the oblong space of light darkened. There were other clicks—the snap of springs. The panels were being put up! Probably the man who had disappeared from sight was doing that.

"Perhaps he's afraid we'll take cold," Jack thought, with a grim smile as, one after one, the panels went into place.

In the meantime, the man peering into the interior, scarcely moved. He was bending forward, as if to observe what was going on in the darkness.

Jack was thinking pretty fast, but to little

purpose. What did it mean? Why were these nocturnal visitors closing the panels?

The boy could not answer these questions for a moment, but when the front panels were all up and the man at the stern drew out of the opening and began to put up the panels there, the purpose of it all came to him.

It was a peculiar, stifling odor that first laid the train of thought which brought him to a realization of what was going on. The odor was that of chloroform!

Jack bent forward and, taking Frank by the arm, clapped a hand close over his mouth and whispered in his ear:

“Cut out the racket, now! Don’t move! Don’t wiggle! There’s doings on board the *Black Bear*! Wake up!”

Frank did wiggle and grunt, however, for the pressing palm of his excited chum shut off his wind and seemed about to choke him to death. Finally he managed to get out from under the hand.

“What the——”

Jack pulled at his arm to command silence and pointed to the stern.

“Look there!” he said, in very faint whisper.

The noise inside had not been heard above the sliding of the panels and the rippling of the current, and what Frank saw was the closing

up of the square at the back. Then the stifling odor came to his nostrils and he attempted to rise to his feet.

"Cut it out!" Jack whispered.

"What is it?" Frank demanded.

"Only a visit from Akbar!"

"What's he shutting us in for?"

"Why, he wants to steal the boat, and us in it!"

"Wake up!" Frank came back.

"See," Jack went on, "he's trying to put us to sleep with chloroform, so we'll be good boys until he gets time to knock us on the head."

"Then why don't we have something to say about this? What are we sitting here for? Waiting for him to put us to sleep?"

"Listen!" whispered Jack. "When he has the panels all in but the top ones, we'll creep back there and haul him inside. He won't be expecting anything like that, and will come in like he was greased!"

Frank grunted as if in disbelief of this last statement.

"Then you sit down on him—*hard*—and I'll wake up the others and turn on the lights, and there you are."

"Mighty fine!" Frank whispered. "Suppose *you* sit down on him!"

"All right!"

The panels were nearly all in, and the overpowering odor of chloroform was becoming decidedly unpleasant, so the two boys moved toward the stern, ready to seize the long arms when they were thrust inside again and draw the lithe body in after them.

While they crept forward they felt the boat moving. The motion was not like the rocking of a boat at anchor. It was like the breezy rush of a boat going forward at a rapid rate of speed.

"They've turned her loose!" Frank whispered.

Without waiting to reply, Jack pushed his hand through the opening, now lacking only one panel, and was fortunate enough to seize the snake-like neck of the figure he saw just outside.

Frank was at his side in an instant, his hands pulling at the shoulders, the hair, the arms, of the struggling figure Jack was endeavoring to draw through a six-inch opening!

The boat swayed and dipped as if some heavy weight had been suddenly added to its burden, and then a long, wavering shriek came from the outside.

The boys heard someone running to the prow, as if to enter by that way and make attack in the rear, but they knew that the hos-

tile visitors had themselves barred the way to such a move.

Then, when the struggles of the man outside grew fainter, the boys felt a strong tug against their strength and knew that the associate of the captured man was trying to draw him away by sheer strength.

"Hang on, Frank!" Jack panted. "Hang on; we'll pull him through the panels before we'll let him get away!"

Then some one crawled past Jack and turned on the light. Frank promptly threw a shoe at the bulb and crushed it.

"You idiot!" he said. "You'll have bullets coming in here."

Bullets did rattle against the panels on the outside, but did no harm, and then there came shouts from the shore, followed by the quick swaying of the boat and a heavy splash in the river.

"Have you got him yet?"

That was Harry's voice, and Jack felt the boy's hand on his arm.

"Sure I've got him, and got him right! Pull in! Pull in! He's been trying to cut my hand!"

By this time Ned and Jimmie were astir. Ned sprang to his feet while Jimmie lay wide-eyed and marveled at the commotion on board!

Ned, quick to understand the situation, began removing the panels at front and back, and in five minutes the air was clearer and Jack's captive, unconscious and blue and purple about the throat, was dragged in. His companion had fled. The boat was moving swiftly down stream, and Ned's first move, then, was to cast out the anchor. It dragged for a minute, the water being deep, then caught and the boat swung around.

He was obliged to find another incandescent bulb before he could make light other than that supplied by the flashlight Frank now turned on the captive.

"It is Akbar!" Frank said, a note of triumph in his voice. "We caught him with the goods."

Jack made no reply, but when Ned had adjusted his bulb and the lights struck upon the whole figure he released his hold of the fellow and sat back on his heels, a disappointed look on his face.

"I really thought it was!" he said.

"Looks like him," Frank ventured.

"It is him!" Jimmie cut in, lifting himself on an elbow to look down on the silent figure on the floor.

"No," Jack said, regretfully, "it is not

Akbar, but a man very like him. I thought it was when I got him by the neck."

"Is he dead?"

This from Harry, who was beginning to look rather troubled.

"Just unconscious from the hug this Black Bear gave him," Ned laughed.

"Then it must have been Akbar who ran away," Frank suggested. "What a coward the fellow is! Still, I guess he was threatened from the shore."

"What did they do it for?" came Jimmie's voice.

"To get the boat," Jack answered. "See how the air still stinks in here! They wanted to put us to sleep and send us over the rapids, I take it."

This is the way the boy had figured it out the instant the odor of chloroform came to his nostrils.

Ned turned on the motors and the boat speeded back to the old anchor place. Half a dozen rough-looking men who had been out hunting the murderers stood on the little pier as the boat came up.

"What's been doing?" one of them asked.

Jack explained what had taken place.

"Those dusky fellows," the man who had asked the question then said, "have been about

town for three days. If we could have laid hands on them today, after the murder—or yesterday, rather, for it is now most morning—we would have locked them up as suspects, but they disappeared early in the afternoon.”

The man stepped into the boat and studied the face of the still unconscious captive.

“Give him a dip in the river,” he advised.

“Go ahead an’ do it,” urged Jimmie. “That will bring him to his senses—if he ever had any.”

“Souse him!” Harry added. “I like to see the bubbles come up.”

“And don’t let go when you have him in the water,” continued the visitor, with a sly wink.

But Ned prevented the thing being done. Although he had no sympathy for the man who had attempted the lives of all on board the *Black Bear*, he did not care to burden his conscience with an act of brutality.

The prisoner was taken ashore and turned over to the keeper of the town jail.

“I want to talk with him sometime today,” Jack said, as the fellow was carried away. “He may know something about Akbar’s intentions and plans.”

As will be surmised, the boy’s real motive in seeing the prisoner was to learn, if possible, the exact measure of Akbar’s knowledge of the

mythical temple! The nearer he came to the location where the temple was believed to be the more infatuated he became with the idea of searching it out unaided and alone!

In the afternoon the boy could get no information whatever out of the prisoner. The fellow pretended that he did not understand what was said to him, and only grunted when questioned.

On the second day, accompanied by Lewis, and leaving Ned and Jimmie in a quiet little family home at Alameda, the boys dropped down to the head of the rapids and tied up. Then followed a week of exploration which the lads always remembered.

It was glorious weather, and the boys never seemed to tire. The Great Northwest seemed to take them into her confidence, and to reveal to them many a secret of the forests, mountains and river. They were golden days and nights!

After all is said, it is probable that river trips similar to this one are the most enjoyable form of vacation. The summer on the seashore grows monotonous, the vacation on the mountain is suitable only for the most sturdy youngsters, and the interior of great forests is too often a shut-in place.

The river trip supplies a constant change of scene. Besides, the owners of a speedy river

boat can join in the amusements of civilization whenever the wilds grow unattractive. The Columbia river comes tumbling down from the backbone of the North American continent, and so is often obliged to take great leaps and bubble over rocky beds, making portages frequent, but there are plenty of rivers in the country where such conditions do not exist.

One day when Jack and Lewis sat alone on the ledge of rock which shut in the valley on the north, the latter asked:

“Have you ever thought of going to Omak lake?”

Jack did not reply instantly. The mention of the name had given him a glad surprise. Omak lake! He had seen that name in the book brought from home! The body of water, wherever it was, must have been christened a long time ago, he thought! And the name! Clearly of East Indian origin! Could it be that he was actually coming into the district he had dreamed of so many nights?

“Where is this lake?” he asked, in as careless a tone as he could assume.

“About ten miles to the north,” was the reply.

“We might go there tomorrow,” Jack suggested.

Lewis grinned provokingly.

"Tomorrow!" he repeated. "Better say we might start tomorrow."

"But only ten miles——"

"Unless you fly there in this aeroplane Leroy is dodging about in, you'll travel about a hundred miles or more before you get to the lake. Half this distance will be around cliffs and mountain spurs and the other half will be straight up in the air and down to the surface again."

"Looks like a rough country off there," Jack admitted, looking over the rapids and down to the "Big W." "Still," he added, "I wouldn't like to leave the district without seeing it."

"Then we'll take the boats back to Alameda tonight," Lewis replied, "leave them there, and in the morning come down in a rowboat, tie it up here, and take a hike for Omak lake. How's that?"

"How long will it take us to get there?" asked Jack cautiously.

"It may take a week."

"And we'll have to pack our provisions?"

"Of course. That is reservation land, and we'll not be likely to come across a department store," laughed the boy.

"Then why not leave Frank and Harry here with the boats and go on alone?" asked Jack. "If they want to go in, why, they can do so

after we come back. What I don't like about your plan," he added, "is the leaving of the boats up there at Alameda with no guard. Ned and Jimmie are not fit to take care of them, and the craft seem to be in pretty good demand."

"That's true," Lewis replied. "Well, then, we'll talk it over with Frank and Harry, and go in tomorrow." Perhaps they won't want to go at all."

Of course it will be understood that Jack's purpose in leaving the others behind on this difficult trip was to gain for himself all the glory of the discovery of the ruined temple! He was not an especially selfish boy, but he had said so much against the theory of the ancient book that he did not want his chums to know that he was really interested in the matter—*until after he had proved successful in his quest!*

At times he regretted taking the stand he had in the matter, but he thought he had gone too far to withdraw, and so he planned to take Lewis with him and make the search without the assistance of his friends. If he found the temple, or anything which might have stood for it in the minds of explorers, he would be glad; if he did not, *no one would know!*

That night the matter was talked over, and

Frank and Harry declared they would remain with the boats above the rapids and await the return of Jack and Lewis. Nothing whatever was said of the ruined temple. In fact, Jack thought Frank altogether too reticent on the subject, for the region about Lake Omak was the region the boy had often referred to in his talk about the treasure, although he had never mentioned the lake by name.

Early in the morning Jack and Lewis were off by daylight, each with a great packet of provisions on his back. Frank and Harry sat thoughtfully by the fire after the early breakfast. Frank began laughing, presently, and then burst out:

“Jack thinks he’s foxy,” he roared. “Wonder if he doesn’t know that I’m on to his game? Wonder if he thinks I don’t know he’s gone in there in search of the ruined temple? Say, Harry,” he went on, “we’re going in there also! We’ll get a guide up at Alameda and beat them to it.”

“It’s a fool search!” declared Harry.

“That may be,” Frank admitted. “To be honest with you, I haven’t much faith in the existence of a temple in there. What would the East Indians want to come over here for to hide their gold away from unscrupulous rulers when they might have selected one of the South

Sea islands? No, kid, I don't believe a word of it!"

"But——"

"Oh, yes, I got to talking that way and kept it up, and Jack got to talking the other way and kept *that* up. I'm sure he's got the book his father says Saxby stole! I've seen him studying over some sort of volume he always hides when any one comes near. You see, we've both been lying about our belief."

"If you think it all bunk, why do you want to go in there?"

"Just to get ahead of Jack, and show him he's not the only warm baby in this bunch," Frank laughed.

"All right," Harry chuckled. "I'm ready. We'll leave the boat up river and go after them right away."

The situation was explained to Ned and Jimmie, and the latter sprang out of bed and began dressing in haste. Frank and Harry grinned, but said nothing.

"You can't lose me," the little fellow said.

But Ned advised against Jimmie going, and the lad went back to bed, determination still in his eyes.

"You just wait," he growled. "I'm going over to that lake! Think I come out here to

knit frizzly little collars an' wear pink ribbons in me hair?"

The boys were off before noon, and Jimmie watched them go almost with tears in his eyes. As they disappeared down the river a shout went up from the straggling street and, looking up, Jimmie saw the aeroplane swinging down from the sky.

"If that's Leroy," the boy mused, excitedly, "I'll bet them fellers won't have anything on me! There! He's going to land! Now for it," and the boy jumped into his clothes and ran.

CHAPTER XIII.

JACK TAKES A COLD BATH.

If you look at the map of the west end of the Colville Indian reservation you will see a yellow splash, which indicates that the makers of the map believe that section to be good grain country. You will also see shadowy lines winding around on the yellow splash, which lines indicate that the country is hilly, if not actually mountainous. There are no towns indicated by the makers of the maps.

Along the north bank of the Columbia there is a line of high hills—they do not call them mountains there—and these Jack and Lewis toiled over under a summer sun until the former was nearly ready to drop with fatigue. When they gained the valley on the opposite side they dropped under the shelter of a cliff and wiped the sweat from their faces.

Before them lay a broken country. Far off to the north, beyond the locality pointed out as the bed of the lake, a spur of lofty mountains lifted, seemingly, to the sky. Jack got out his water canteen and drank to the health of the summit!

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"We're coming to visit you, old man!" he shouted.

Lewis regarded his friend with a curious smile.

"I knew it!" he said.

"Knew what?" demanded Jack.

"Knew that you were coming in here in quest of the temple these ginks have been imagining."

"How did you know?" laughed the other. "I've been talking right against the theory of the temple!"

"Yes; but you like to talk about it! Well, the mountains which you see are said to be the ones which conceal the hidden canyon which in turn conceals the temple."

"Have you ever been here before?" asked Jack.

"Never," was the reply.

"But the locality has been frequently traveled over?"

"No; I think not."

"But you said there had been people over here looking for the temple?"

"Yes; but not exactly. You see, the temple was generally believed to have been built within the lake."

what do you think about it?"

it was never built!"

"You may be right," Jack admitted. "I'm half inclined to your opinion, yet I've started in to look it up, and so I'm going to find it if it is above ground—and my curiosity and grub hold out!"

"We may as well be moving on," Lewis said, after a long rest, during which little else than the hidden temple was talked about. "We have a short distance to go, if you figure miles as the birds fly, but a long ways when you consider how much up-and-down surface we've got to climb."

The boys did not make good progress that day, however, for Jack was new to mountain climbing and soon wearied. Lewis loitered along, hardy and apparently tireless, and told the boy strange tales of the people who had visited that section in quest of the temple and the mysterious things which had happened to them. There had been a tragedy, too.

"The only party I ever heard of going on into Omak mountains—the spur north of the lake of the same mountain—came back minus two members," the boy explained, watching Jack intently. Jack's eyes lighted with the lust of adventure, and that was all. Lewis went on:

"They reported at Alameda that they reached the foot of a mountain at nightfall and

made camp there. They said they reached the angle of a deep canyon, running into the mountain, and arranged to follow it up as far as possible the next day. The next day never came for at least two of them."

"What happened?" asked Jack, all interest.

"During the night, they said, an unearthly light, like a burst of sulphurous fire, showed in the canyon. The two who advanced toward it never came back. Their companions heard their voices for a few moments, and then they were drowned by a flow of weird music. Then a great crash came, and the canyon was only a deserted old notch in the mountain—no flames, no music, no investigators!"

"Honest?" asked Jack.

"That is the way they told the story when they came out."

"But they found the bodies of their companions?"

"They said not."

"And they are in the mountains still?"

"I believe so."

Jack mused a moment and then asked:

"What sort of people made up that party?"

"Oh, that's different," laughed Lewis. "I've been anticipating that question. Well, the party was composed, so far as I can learn, of two gentlemen and three thieves."

"I thought so! And yet no one investigated?"

"Oh, yes, there was an inquiry. An attorney and a detective came on from New York, and the whole region was searched. But, by the time the searchers reached Alameda, the three members of the party who had escaped were nowhere to be found."

"Of course it was murder?" Jack asked.

"Probably."

"And robbery. The men were wealthy? And carried plenty of money and valuable jewelry on their persons. Well?"

"Yes; that is the way I sized it up."

"What were the wealthy men doing in there?" asked Jack presently.

"I don't know. Looking for the same thing you are in quest of, perhaps."

"I'd like to know," Jack said, impatiently, "how many people there are in the world who know all about this alleged temple? It seems to me that it takes rank with the treasure of Captain Kidd. Everybody knows all about it, but no one finds it. Look here," the boy continued, "were the two men murdered because they were likely to discover the whereabouts of the ruins, or were they murdered for what valuables they had on their persons? What sort of men were the three thieves?"

"My notion is that they were murdered for what they had on their persons, though there are those who believe that some mysterious influence which guards the temple put them to death and destroyed their bodies."

"The more I hear about this thing," Jack declared, "the more I'm determined to get to the bottom of it. Fine roast I'll have on Frank when I come back with the full particulars!"

That night the boys made a simple camp half way to the lake. The next night they camped on the north side of the body of water lying between the river and the mountain. On the third night they built their cooking fire at the angle of a deep canyon running into the mountains.

"We've made good time, better than I anticipated," Lewis said, as they fried fish and bacon over a bed of coals. "According to all accounts, it took the party I have been telling you about a week to get out."

"Is this the spot where they camped?"

"This is the spot where they said they camped."

"Then up there," pointing up the narrow canyon, "is the place where the two men came to their death?"

"Yes; that is the place. One of the men who came in with the lawyer and the detective

described it to me. I brought you directly here because I knew you would want to make your investigations and get back as soon as possible."

"Right!" Jack cried. "We'll make our beds here, under this ledge, and sleep like little children! Then, tomorrow, we'll find the temple."

Jack was going on with his enthusiastic talk when Lewis lifted a warning hand.

"Just a minute!" he said.

Jack stopped with a word on his tongue's end and stood at attention. It was very still there, save for the call of a bird high up on the mountain. The sun was going down over a jumble of lower hills to the west, and already a dusky mist lay over the canyon into which they looked.

"What is it?" asked Jack, in a moment.

The answer came from the canyon, and not from the lips of the boy of whom the question had been asked.

"Ha! Ha! Ho! Ho!"

"There's some one in there!" Jack whispered. "I'll bet some of the toughs who attacked the merchant are hiding here!"

"Ha! Ha! Ha!"

The laugh was weird, defiant. Jack reached

for his automatic and advanced a step, but Lewis caught him by the arm.

"Don't go in there," he said. "I half believe the thieves *are* there."

"Then we ought to get them."

"Alone? Say, but you're a bad actor! What could we do with a bunch like that?"

"It may only be some of the boys doing this for a joke, or the boy of the aeroplane. They'll laugh at us if we back out now."

"I'd rather face a joke than a bullet!" Lewis said. "Especially when I have no chance to return the compliment."

The boys drew away from the entrance to the canyon and hastily gathered up their camping articles and provisions. It was quite evident that they could not remain where they were through the night and rest in safety.

"They'll be down on us as soon as we get to sleep," Lewis said. "Now," he went on, "the man I told you about, the fellow who came in here with the lawyer and the detective, told me of a place they found—a cute little place where we can pass the night without listening for callers."

"I wish Ned was here," Jack grumbled. "I don't know what to do in a case like this. He'd know mighty quick what to make of that idiotic laughter in there."

“Come on!” urged Lewis, and they walked through the gathering twilight to the north, keeping close to the foot of the undulations which led sharply to the greater bulk of the mountain itself.

There were shrubs and vines here and there in crevices, and in little dips they passed grass was growing luxuriously. In places the rock of the mountain came down to the uneven ledge they were following, and sometimes the face of the precipice thus formed wore a tangle of vines, some in blossom, some only “scratchy,” as Jack expressed it, but all bent on hiding the face of the rock from the light of the sun.

They tramped along for what seemed to Jack to be three hours, and then Lewis stopped at a sharp angle, looked over the valley for a moment, and turned into a thicket at the base of a vertical wall of rock.

“Here we are,” he said. “Walk in and make yourself at home!”

Jack stepped into the thicket, passed through a mass of clinging vines, and found himself in an alcove of rock. Lewis sat on a boulder which had fallen from the roof, and grinned as he looked around.

“In there,” he said, presently, “is a tunnel. I guess some earthquake made it a million

years or more ago. Anyway, it is a slip in the rock, and there's a crack we can follow up if we have to hide. That is one fine thing about this country. You can find plenty of hiding places!"

Jack peered into the natural tunnel and got out his searchlight.

"What are you going to do?" asked Lewis.

"See what's in there."

Lewis stepped out to the entrance of the niche in which they stood and looked in the direction of the canyon.

"All right," he said, turning back.

"What did you do that for?" asked Jack.

"I wanted to know if we were being watched."

"Anybody in sight?"

"Too dark to see, but I could have heard voices. Then, you know, they wouldn't be crawling along in the darkness."

"I wish I knew who they were," Jack grumbled. "Seems as if we've been trailed by unknowns ever since we started on our motor boat trip."

The boys listened a short time, then proceeded along the tunnel, which was not more than a yard wide, and was sometimes so low that they were obliged to crawl on their hands and knees.

The flashlight revealed only bare rock. There had been a readjustment of levels, at some distant time, and the rock had cracked there, one side of the break slipping down and tipping away to the west. Such freaks of nature are not at all rare in the mountainous districts of the world.

After proceeding some distance the boys heard the noise of running water. The sound grew louder as they advanced, and when at last they entered a chamber in the rock they felt the spray of a waterfall on their faces. The flashlight showed a channel about five yards in width through which speeded a roaring torrent.

The chamber in which the boys now found themselves was, perhaps, ten paces in width and twice that in length, the latter dimension following the break in the rock. Across this curious opening, at about the center, dashed the subterranean stream, the surface running a couple of yards below the lips of the cut it had made in the floor of the cavern.

Across the torrent the boys could see a dark spot in the north wall, as if the tunnel they had followed was continued on that side.

Jack turned his flashlight about the place with acute interest. In Mexico he had come upon something of the kind, and he surmised

that the apartment he saw was not the only one under the mountain. The same cause that had produced this one might well have produced others.

But the walls of the chamber seemed to be smooth and unbroken. Lewis watched him for a moment and then pointed across the channel.

"When we get over there," he said, "we may discover something worth while."

Jack regarded his friend with inquiring eyes.

"How are we going to get across?" he asked.

Lewis took a long rope from his waist and held it up with a grin.

"I thought we might need it," he said. "Now, you ain't afraid of getting wet, are you?"

"I should say not," Jack replied, but he looked into the dark water below with a little shiver. "What's the proposition?"

"This chamber," Lewis continued, "is as far as explorers have ever gone. I did not tell you this before, but this place is quite well known—that is, its existence is pretty well known. But no one, so far as is known, however, has ever crossed this stream. It is believed that this cavern ends the tunnel."

"Well, it doesn't," Jack said, turning his flashlight on the dark spot in the wall across

the torrent. "Come here and you can see the light penetrating an opening in the rock."

"A torch wouldn't supply that sharp point of light," Lewis remarked, "and so the continuation of the tunnel has never been suspected. Now, we will take our evening bath, if you have no objections."

"How?" asked Jack. "You make the cold chills run up and down my back by the very mention of going in there."

He threw a stone in, but it was swept down stream and under the exit arch by the rapid current.

"No one knows how deep it is," he said.

"We don't care," Lewis replied. "We're going to take off our clothes, tie them up in neat bundles and toss them across. Then we're going to tie this rope to that point of rock at the east and hang to it while the current swings us across."

"It won't," Jack objected. "It will hold us where the pressure is strongest, in the middle of the stream."

"I'm going to try it, anyway," Lewis said, tying the rope to the rock pointed out and trailing the length of it into the water.

Jack watched him with a smile on his face.

"You're all right!" he said, presently, "but how are we going to get back?"

"Never thought of that!" said the other, scratching his head.

"Easy!" Jack laughed. "Make two ropes out of that one and take one with us."

"Sure," said Lewis.

After cutting the rope and seeing that the part attached to the rock was firm, the boys laid aside the second piece to use in fastening their clothes in a compact bundle.

"Now," said Lewis, "you hold the light and I'll catch hold of the rope and jump in, after I strip. When I get across you put the searchlight into the bundle and throw it across. I'll light a match so you can see where to throw it. Then you come."

"Wait!" Jack advised. "What about eats? I'm going back to the niche in the wall of rock and make some bacon sandwiches. We may be in there quite a long time."

"All right—only hurry."

In a short time the boy was back with a liberal supply of bread and fried fish and bacon. These were closely wrapped and packed in with the clothes, which were soon removed, and then Lewis, who had been holding the flashlight, extended it toward Jack.

"I'll go now," he said.

"Nix!" cried Jack, with a provoking laugh. "Me for the river first."

Before Lewis could protest the boy was in the current, clinging to the rope. He kicked out sturdily for the other side, but the current was swift, and Lewis saw him drawn down to the full length of the rope as his hands slipped on the wet hemp.

Then, in a moment, the swimmer disappeared under the arch which served as an exit for the turbulent waters. Lewis shouted, but no answer came. The rope was still drawn taut, however, and the boy took hope from the fact.

Jack must still be clinging to the end of it, and might draw himself out if he had not been weakened by coming in contact with the walls of the outlet.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE QUEST OF THE SKY MAN.

When Jimmie reached the open street, his head still bandaged and his clothes only half on, he found a group of men watching the aeroplane. The propeller was now still. There was dead silence as the great machine, with the dipping swoop of a gull after a leaping fish in the water, hovered over the low houses and finally lighted in the road a few rods away, with neatness and precision.

The men rushed forward as the driver, a tall lad of perhaps eighteen, with a slender, sinewy form, dark hair and eyes and a wholesome face, stepped down, but he motioned them back.

"Kindly keep away from the machine," he said.

Jimmie rushed forward with a grin which seemed to obliterate every feature of his face.

"Leroy!" he cried.

"The same!" replied the boy. "I came down to see you, Jimmie," he added. "Want to take a little ride?"

Jimmie jumped for the machine. As he did so Ned came out of the house where he was stopping and called out to Leroy:

"Don't take that kid away, Sam! He isn't fit."

"Are you?" asked Leroy.

"Sure!" replied Ned. "I'm dying for a ride through the air."

"Let her go!" Jimmie urged, fearful, now, that he was going to lose his promised adventure. "Ned's too sick to go."

"I can take you both," Leroy said. "Of course it will be something of a load, and the kid will have to be held, like a baby, but he doesn't weigh more than a pound, so it will be all right."

The crowd looked enviously on as Ned climbed aboard the machine, took Jimmie in his lap, and the great bird started away, slipping over the smooth road for a few yards, and then vaulting into the air.

"What does all this mean?" asked Ned as the little landing town was left in the distance. "Why haven't you come to us before?"

"Oh, I made a mystery of it just for the fun of the thing," laughed Leroy. "Then, you see, I wanted to know that I wasn't here on any fool errand before I told what I was doing."

"Did you find it?" asked Ned.

"Find what?"

"The temple."

"Temple nothing!" Leroy exclaimed. "I'm

after something more valuable to me than any old temple."

"What did you try to send us back home for?" asked Jimmie, scornfully.

"I knew you wouldn't go," laughed Leroy.

"You're a nice Boy Scout," Jimmie said, then, "to show signals of distress and duck away."

"I squared that with another smoke column, didn't I?" asked the driver. "But I can't tell you all about the trip until we get where we can talk without making so much effort. By and by we'll come to a valley, across the Columbia, and then I'll drop down and we'll hold a talkfest!"

They reached the little valley before many minutes had passed, and the *Nelson*, as the aeroplane was called, dropped down on a grassy plain.

"Now," Leroy said, "I know why you are here. I learned all about your trip before I left New York, so you won't have to spin any long stories. I suppose I shouldn't have come if you had not started, for I wouldn't have taken up this enterprise alone, and I was certain of your assistance as soon as you reached this point."

"Of course," Ned said, wondering what Leroy could have in mind.

"You will be surprised when I tell you what my mission up here is," the boy went on, "but, whether I succeed in it or not, I want you to believe what I tell you is the exact truth."

"Sure!" Jimmie said.

"You remember the Leroy embezzlement case, a year ago?" asked the boy.

Ned recalled the case, which had puzzled the detectives of two continents.

"Yes," he said. "The newspapers said Richard Leroy stole half a million and got away with it."

"Well, he didn't."

"Didn't get away with it?"

"Didn't steal it."

"Oh," said Ned.

"It looked bad for him," Leroy went on, "and so he ran away."

"I remember."

"And came up here."

"Say!" Jimmie began, but Ned checked him.

"Came up here and hid himself in the mountains—came with a trusted friend and sent his guides back, loaded with presents, to report his death in the hills."

"And so he is believed to be dead?"

"Yes; an attorney and a detective were sent on from New York—an attorney for the bank

and a detective from the Pinkerton office. They never found the two men—never found a trace of them. They never even found the guides, who, by the way, were suspected of murdering the men.”

“And this Richard Leroy is——”

“My brother!”

“I see,” Ned said slowly. “And now?”

“I am up here to take him back to New York.”

“Acquitted of all blame?”

“Yes; the president of the bank stole the money. He confessed when he faced death not long ago.”

“I must have missed that—never saw that in the newspapers.”

“It was never printed in the newspapers, and never will be. My brother goes back to his old position in the bank, and the president retires. It is a part of the bargain that the president’s crime is not to be given out to the officers of the law nor to the newspapers.”

“He has made restitution?”

“Oh, yes, what restitution he can make has been made. He has restored the money, but he can never restore the mother who died because of her son’s alleged disgrace. I feel like murdering him! Suppose Dick is dead? Suppose he has been devoured by wild beasts?

Suppose he has left the country, never to inform us of his whereabouts?"

"I think," Ned replied, "that you'll find him up here somewhere. He came here to hide until his innocence could be established?"

"Yes; and now I have come for him."

"Do you know where to look for him?"

"Not exactly. The men who took my brother and Dunlop, his friend, into this country cannot be found now, but I have good reason to believe that they are located in one of those valleys over there," pointing beyond the snow-capped peak of the elevation beyond the lake.

"You have already been in there?" asked Ned.

"Yes; but I have failed. I hope, with your assistance, to be more successful on this trip. Shall we be moving?"

Ned thought over the situation for a moment and said:

"There are four boys in there somewhere, in two parties, and I'd like to get on the ground without their knowledge."

"That will be all right," Leroy replied. "I can sail the *Nelson* by moonlight or starlight as well as by sunlight. We'll wait until dusk, if you think best, and come into the spur from the north."

"That will be fine!" Jimmie burst out. "I'd

like to drop down on one of their heads! They wouldn't let me go with 'em!"

Leroy had a bag of provisions with him, and the boys made a hearty supper before taking to the air again.

"Are you going to show lights over the mountain, and so attract their attention?" asked Ned, as they started away.

"If he does," Jimmie interrupted, "he'll get a piece of lead in his machine. The men that robbed the store are hiding in there. I heard one of the officers at Alameda say so."

"That's a fact," Ned agreed. "I never thought of that."

"In that case," Leroy said, "we'd better come down in some valley shut in by the hills and look quietly about until morning. I wish I knew of such a place."

"Why didn't you pick up a guide?" asked Jimmie.

"I had a man who said he knew all about this country, up to a week ago, but he ran off and left me."

"What sort of a man?" asked Ned, a sudden suspicion in his voice.

"Short, heavy, dark, bull-necked chap."

"That was Saxby," Ned exclaimed. "That is a trick he played to get in here. You found him at Nelson?"

"Yes," was the reply, "I found him at Nelson, and he claimed to know all about the Columbia river country. He took me in nicely, but I suppose that I'm to blame for it all, as I should have demanded references of him."

"Did he really show any knowledge of the districts you traveled over?" asked Ned.

"Well," answered Leroy, with an engaging smile, "he seemed to possess a fairly good book knowledge of it, though where he could have procured that is a mystery to me. When I first thought of coming up here I sought books describing the territory and found very few of them."

"I guess," Jimmie, still huddled in Ned's lap, like a baby, interrupted, "this Saxby person is next to himself most of the time! Don't you think we'll hear more from him before we get out of the state?" he asked Ned.

"Without doubt," Ned replied. "He is probably making for some point down the river where he believes the hidden treasure to be, and undoubtedly believes that we are after the same prize. I have an idea, too, that he has joined forces with the men who committed the murder at Alameda."

"It will be a warm old time when Akbar and Saxby get into action!" chuckled the boy. "I hope I shall be there to see it!"

Leroy looked puzzled at the mention of Akbar, and Ned explained the situation with regard to that persistent rascal.

"And so," mused Leroy, "the hostile forces are gathering! Let us see. There is Saxby, probably associated with a band of cutthroats, then there is Akbar, whose side partner is in jail in Alameda but who is still in the ring, and there are the river thieves, possibly, all pointing for this alleged buried gold! It really seems as if there would be plenty of fireworks directly."

"Yes," grinned Jimmie, "an' don't forget two parties of Boy Scouts, each one tryin' to get to this shadowy temple first—three parties, if you count this bunch!"

"But this 'bunch,' as you call it," suggested Ned, "is in quest of a brother who came here long ago to await the slow motions of justice."

"Yes, but we're headed for the place where the temple is supposed to be," insisted Jimmie, "and we're bound to get to it if there's anything of the sort in these mountains."

The two boys laughed at the little fellow's prediction, but they both knew that it was likely to come true. They were on the ground, and certainly would not take their departure without some knowledge of the mysterious temple, if anything of the kind was there.

“When did you see this man Saxby last?” asked Ned, presently. “I have an idea that he left you because he found congenial spirits. It does not seem to me as if he would leave you when you were headed toward the very point he sought, and then try to make his way to the place alone. That is why I suggested that he might have joined forces with the men who murdered the merchant at Alameda.”

“I saw him last when not far from Alameda,” Leroy replied. “He left the aeroplane on the plea of getting a shot at a deer we saw in the forest, and never came back. After waiting an hour or more for him, I sailed away. Later I saw him with four very rough-looking fellows, skulking in a thicket near the town.”

“Then that settles that!” Jimmie remarked. “He’s with that bunch of thieves, all right enough! With four men to help him, he’s likely to make things hum before the officers get him!”

“Yes,” Ned replied, “there is sure to be trouble. I’m afraid that Jack and Lewis or Frank and Harry will encounter the outlaws. Perhaps it would be well for us to drop down into some quiet valley and look about.”

“Very well,” Leroy replied, and in a moment the great bird was shooting off to the

north, to the east of the range of mountains. It was dusk now, and the paint on the aeroplane was of that neutral color which renders objects upon which it is used indistinct even at short distances, so the lads were not afraid of being seen by those below them. Besides, the motors of the *Nelson* worked almost noiselessly, so there was little or no danger to be feared from the outlaws.

After winging its way to the north for some distance, the great airship wheeled and came slowly back to the south, over the range now, with the boys searching the surface below for a suitable landing place.

What they sought was a place of concealment for the ship as well as a desirable level for landing purposes. It was their intention now to leave the machine under guard of one of their number and search the valleys during the night, when the light of cooking fires might readily be seen, and when voices were more likely to be heard.

Leroy had already, apparently before the arrival of the outlaws, explored the entire region from his aeroplane without finding a trace of the two men he was seeking. He had sent out signals which he was sure his brother would have answered if he had seen them, but no hint of the men had he found.

Before seeking Ned, whom he had followed and serenaded in a spirit of mischief, he had about abandoned hope of discovering the whereabouts of his brother, but now, with the assistance of the Boy Scouts, he was certain that he would be able to accomplish the task he had come there to perform.

After a time the boys came to a valley, very dim in the uncertain light, which seemed broad and level enough at the bottom to furnish a safe landing place, so Leroy spiraled down until he had a good view of it. There was long grass growing in some parts of the secluded nook, and vines and bushes in other parts, but there was a clear spot in the center which received the rubber-tired wheels of the machine without noise or risk, and the lads were soon out on the ground.

Jimmie, who now, under the excitement of the moment, seemed to be as well and strong as ever, notwithstanding the fact that his head was still bandaged, at once darted off on a tour of investigation. He had heard Ned and Leroy talking of leaving someone on guard, and was suspicious that he would be the one chosen for that duty, so he took advantage of the first busy moments after the landing and disappeared in the darkness.

The valley where the *Nelson* had landed was

small; the boy soon came to a stiff slope which gave promise of being a fine observatory, and so he began the climb. He was still weak, however, and often stopped to rest. On one of these occasions he heard, quite distinctly, the murmur of running water.

He looked in every direction and listened, but could see no stream making its way down the face of the mountain. Mystified at what he heard, yet unable to solve the puzzle, he was preparing to climb still higher when he came to an opening in the side of the slope. He stepped inside, and then the location of the running stream was no longer a mystery.

The din of the waters increased as he advanced into the narrow tunnel in the rock, and presently he distinguished a vanishing gleam of light in the distance. Then human voices reached his ears, and, surmising that he had come upon the camp of the outlaws, he crouched down to await the next act in the strange drama.

He wished for a moment that Ned had accompanied him, then the glory of doing something important "all by his lonesome," as he put it, stimulated his flagging courage, and he awaited the unknown with a brave heart.

CHAPTER XV.

A BLACK BEAR IN A CAGE.

Lewis, standing in the cavern, at the lip of the rushing stream, waited for what seemed to his excited imagination a long time before the face of his chum again appeared above the foaming waters. He had known Jack only a short time, yet the two lads were so similar in their tastes that a great friendship had sprung up between them.

In a moment Lewis saw that Jack's hands had slipped on the wet hemp, and that he was almost at the very end of the rope, trying to draw himself up hand-over-hand. This was a difficult task in the face of that swirling torrent, and Lewis motioned that he would draw up the line, which he did, much to the relief of the half-drowned boy.

Jack was shivering when he grasped Lewis' hand and was drawn out on the side from which he had entered the stream, but, after wrapping himself in his coat for a few moments, he was ready for another trial.

"That's an uncanny place, that tunnel the water drew me into," he said. "I thought of about every mean thing I ever did while

strangling in the dark, with the current pounding against the top of my head. There are fish in there, too, and they banged against my face like slimy snakes as they were swept down stream. Ugh!"

"Well," Lewis advised, "don't take so much rope next time. Take hold close up and let it out a little as you kick yourself across. If you do your very best, the chances are that you'll only reach the other shore close to the outlet."

Jack considered this very good advice, and on the next trial succeeded in getting across and climbing up out of the water, his teeth chattering with the chill of it.

"Say," he called across to Lewis, "you'll have to throw me some matches. I had some in a waterproof box, but I lost it in scrambling out of the drink."

Lewis felt in all his pockets, then went through them again, but ended by shaking his head gravely.

"I haven't got any more matches than a robin," he said. "I'll have to toss the search-light across, and you must be dead sure you catch it. We'd be in a deuce of a mess in here without any light."

"Well," Jack called back, "toss my clothes over first. I'm freezing. Then, as soon as I

get dressed you can pitch the light over. "I'll catch it, all right."

Lewis did as requested, and Jack was soon dressed. The former then threw his own clothes across and was about to send the flashlight after them when he paused and suggested:

"Perhaps I'd better tie a string to it, so if anything goes wrong we won't lose it."

"Oh, I'll have no trouble in catching it," Jack laughed. "Let her come!"

Lewis gave the important article a toss toward Jack's outstretched hands, not more than eighteen feet away, and the latter stepped to one side to catch it, the throw not having been a direct one. But Jack's foot rocked on a loose stone as it descended, his ankle turned, and down he went, trying as he fell to seize the flashlight as it passed the very tips of his fingers.

But he did not quite reach it. The precious electric darted past his hand and struck the wall back of him. There was a cry of alarm from Lewis, a crash of breaking glass, and then the light disappeared. A second later Jack heard the now worthless thing roll slowly down the declivity on which he stood and drop into the stream.

"Good thing I got my clothes over," Lewis

said, with a forced laugh. "I can get over in the dark easily. Start up a whistle, so I'll know where you are. My! It's as dark as a pocket in here!"

"Wait!" Jack exclaimed. "Don't come over here. We've got to go back! We can never go on without a light. There may be breaks in the floor of the tunnel, and we would be dropping into them head first. Wait until I get my clothes off and I'll come over."

Lewis seemed to be studying the situation over, for he made no reply for a moment.

"All right!" at length came over the stream, but the voice seemed hoarse and affected, and not at all like that of the lad on the opposite bank.

Jack caught the strange note in the voice and listened. Above the din of the waters he heard a slight shuffling of feet straight across. That might be Lewis pulling at the rope, or it might be——

Jack did not carry out the thought, for a strangling cry came out of the darkness, and he knew.

"Lewis! Lewis!" he called.

There was no answer from the opposite side, but it seemed to the listening boy that the current below was beating against an obstruction which had not existed a moment before. That

would mean that some one was crossing the river, presumably to seize him just as Lewis might have been taken.

Grunts and sighs of exhaustion now came from below, showing that the surmise that some one was crossing by means of the rope was correct, and Jack stood ready to help the adventurous one back into the water as soon as he should attempt to land. There was no doubt in his mind now that they had come upon the outlaws who were being pursued by the people of Alameda.

In that case, the boy thought, Saxby would probably be foremost in whatever was done—in whatever evil and vicious plans for the murder of the captive might be made. He decided right there that he would leave his mark on the party before being taken.

Presently the noises in the water ceased for an instant, the current roared more fiercely, as if angry at an additional obstruction, and then a despairing cry cut the air. The cry wavered, smothered, then swept away. There was only one deduction to be drawn from all this: The swimmer had either lost hold of or broken the rope and had been swept into the outlet. Jack knew that, in that case, nothing could save him.

While he listened in the darkness for fur-

ther sounds, Lewis' voice came from over the stream:

"Oh, Jack?"

"All right, Chummie!"

"Are *you* all right?"

"Surest thing in the world! How about you?"

"I'm tied up like a codfish ready for shipment!" was the reply. "I guess the bogey man got me! Did you give him a clip when he tried to land?"

"No; I think he broke the rope and went down stream. If he did, that is the last of him."

"Can you get across?" asked Lewis, then. "There are others about. They have gone around the cliffs to head you off on the other side. The man who went down was to chase you into their hands. Come on across, and we'll get out of this."

"Can you catch your clothes if I throw 'em?"

"No, of course not; I'm all corded up. Bring 'em over with you."

"But they'll get wet."

"Never mind that; they'll soon get dry when we reach the warm air of the valley again. Hurry up! These cords cut like knives!"

"Wait until I find a place to tie this rope,"

Jack replied, "and I'll be right over. Gee, but I hate to take another dip in that water!"

But he did finally take a dip in the water, and came out, soaking wet, of course, on the other side, with his chum's clothes, also dripping, under his arm. Feeling about in the darkness, he found Lewis, cut the cords which held him, and the two, shaking with the cold, started along the winding tunnel, back to the open air of the valley.

But they were not yet rid of the surprises of the subterranean place. As they reached the narrow slit in the rock through which they had entered the chamber Jack turned back and strained his eyes through the black interior. Then, with a quick exclamation of surprise, he seized Lewis by the arm.

"Just wait a second!" he cried. "There's some one over there with a light. Do you think the men who started around the cliffs to head me off have had time to get back under the mountain?"

"They certainly have not had time to clamber over the heights and get in here," Lewis replied. "Besides, that is a flashlight! The outlaws had nothing of the kind. There! Listen to that!"

"That" was the long, low snarl of a wolf!

"It is either Jimmie or Ned!" Jack ex-

claimed. "But how the dickens did he, whoever he is, get in here? Why, we've made good time, and have just gotten in ourselves! Anyone who followed us must naturally be a day behind us! Wait!"

The low, long-drawn-out growl of a bear wavered through the cavern, and then the flashlight across the stream began a curious acrobatic performance.

"What's that about?" asked Lewis. "Seems the lad has gone crazy!"

Jack did not reply. He was too busy reading "wig-wag" signals.

"One," he said, as the light shot up a vertical ray, then swung off to the right, embracing an arc of 90 degrees, and returning without pause to the vertical again, "one again. Now, two," as the motion was repeated on the left, "and again two. That combination means 'J'. Now, can't you guess who it is?" he added, giving his friend's arm a pinch.

"I sure can guess," was the reply.

"One," Jack went on, as the light wavered again. "That is 'I'. And here's one, two, two, one. That's 'M'. 'Jim'. That's enough, kid," he then called out. "Come on across the brook. The water's fine!"

"How?" demanded the boy.

Jack and his friend retraced their steps and

explained to the little fellow that he would have to take hold of the rope and swim for it, first throwing the light across.

“And we’ll try not to muff it!” Jack called out.

Jimmie was not at all averse to a swim, for he did not know how cold the water of the underground stream was. So he tossed his light across, seized the end of the rope Jack had used on his return trip, and leaped in.

Then his weakness made itself manifest, for he did not seem to have the power to force his way across in the face of the current. He hung on bravely, but made no progress. Jack threw off his coat and, taking hold of the rope on his side, dropped in and drifted down to the struggling lad.

“Here!” cried Jimmie, as Jack seized him by the hair of his head and called to Lewis to draw in on the rope, “I’d just as leave be drowned as to be snatched baldheaded! Let go!”

But Jack hung on, much to the little fellow’s disgust, until both were on the ledge where Lewis stood. Jimmie’s teeth rattled like stones in a bag as he faced the others.

“How did you get in here?” he asked.

“Never mind that now,” Jack replied. “We might ask you the same question, for we last

saw you at Alameda, but there is no time. Close the light and follow on behind. There'll be doings here in a short time if we don't get out."

"Can't get out any too soon to please me," chattered Jimmie. "I never was so cold in me innocent life."

But once more the departure from the chamber was interrupted, for half a dozen torches showed redly down the tunnel, and then the gleam of rifles came with sullen threat of a new danger.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE LAST OF TWO VILLAINS.

"Get out your guns, fellows," Jimmie whispered, as the lights, shining on rough faces, came nearer. "They can come only one at a time and we can hold 'em off until their whiskers turn gray."

"You've got your nerve!" Lewis laughed, as he caught sight of one of the hairy faces under the foremost torch. "Those are the man-hunters from Alameda. Hello, Sol!" he added, calling out to the leader of the posse.

"Who is it?" came the question.

"Lewis," was the reply. "What do you want in here?"

"Well," replied the other, approaching and dropping the butt of his automatic rifle to the level rock, "we thought there might be more of the thieves in here, so we trailed on in."

"Did you capture some one out there?" asked Jack.

"Four as tough looking fellows as ever stole a horse," was the reply, "and one of them has a bullet wound in the shoulder. That's the man the murdered storekeeper shot, sure enough."

"I hope so," Lewis replied. "But we may

as well get out into the valley," he added. "I'm freezing to death."

Sol, the leader of the posse, now turned to Jimmie.

"Are you one of the boys who came here in the aeroplane?" he asked.

"Sure," replied the boy, and Jack and Lewis regarded him with envy. This, then, accounted for his being there so soon after their arrival!

"Who came with you?" demanded Jack.

"Ned and Leroy," was the reply. "I left 'em in a valley on the other side of the ridge. Guess they'll be anxious about me."

"Well," the other went on, "you kids left the motor boats without guard, and there's always a good demand for boats of that description in this country. Perhaps you'd better go back and look after them!"

This with a low chuckle.

"Why," Jack replied, "we left Frank and Harry in charge of the boats."

"And they dug out the same day for this locality," replied Sol. "They left Ned and Jimmie in charge, and *they* came away in an airship!"

"I'd like to know how you found all this out," Lewis observed. "You've been in here

three days. How do you know what's been going on at Alameda?"

"Well," replied Sol, "we've just left Frank and Harry, as you call 'em, outside, and we saw some people coming this way in an air-ship. That accounts for your party, I take it?"

"It seems to me," grumbled Jack, "that Frank and Harry got here in less time than it took us to arrive! They must have started a number of hours after we did."

"Anyway," answered Sol, "they've got a camp over in a valley to the west, and are going in quest of the hidden temple you've all been talking about, in the morning. We told 'em to save their shoes and their strength, but they're going, just the same. Ha! That's good bunk about the temple!"

"Hurry up!" Jimmie exclaimed, as the two showed a disposition to continue the conversation. "I want to get out of this. I'm freezing, an' Ned will think I've got muddled in the cupelo an' wandered away."

The party lost no further time, but made its way out of the subterranean passages as swiftly as possible. They faced the south when they at last stood on the ledge outside, and away to the left the flush of coming day lay over the sky. At the edge of the declivity they

found a guard of two men standing over the four outlaws who had been captured as they left the tunnel in order to move to the other end of it and so cut off the retreat of the boy they had left on the other side of the stream.

"Where's Jake?" one of them asked, looking questioningly at Jack.

"The man you left on guard in there?"

Jack asked the question on the impulse of the moment, for reason told him that the fellow could be asking for no one else.

"He tried to swim the river," he went on, "and was swept away."

The boy thought his questioner turned a little whiter at the information, and was about to question him when a second captive asked:

"Did you see him—the man that was swept away?"

"How could I—in the darkest hole that ever set a body crazy for light?"

"Well, you'd have known him if you had, I take it," said the other. "He said he knew you, and wanted to get to you for a talk."

"Saxby!" cried Jack, a quiver at the awful fate of the man shaking his limbs. "Did Saxby die like that?"

The other nodded and turned away, but Jack was in no mood to be cheated out of the rest of the story, so he asked:

“He came to you with a story of a ruined temple, didn’t he?”

The other nodded and glanced curiously at his questioner.

“You told him you could help him find it?”
Another sullen nod.

“Well, is there such a thing as a ruined temple hereabouts?”

“Blessed if I know,” was the reply. “We never found anything that looked like one. The man Akbar who tried to kill Scoby might have found one, but we did not.”

“So Akbar was here, too?” asked Jack.

“Where is he now?” Jimmie broke in.

“He crept up to our camp and Scoby shot—just took a chance shot, you know—and—well, you’ll find him over in the gulch somewhere, I take it.”

“Dead!” exclaimed Jack, with horror in his eyes. “Dead!”

“As a herring,” was the heartless answer. “What did he go for to prying about our camp for, then? Anyway, it was Jake Saxby what finished him—not me.”

There was a brief silence, and then Jimmie spoke, showing a new side to his bubbling nature:

“They both came to their death! They trav-

eled thousands of miles to find graves that have been waiting for them since they were born!"

"That's right, Jimmie," Jack said, "though I don't know where you ever stumbled on the belief of the fatalists. They came out here to murder each other, or any one who stood in their way, and this is the end! They died without coming to the goal they hoped for. It is all in the game!"

He tried to smile at the last sentence, but his face still showed the shock he had sustained. He had known both of the dead men well at the home of his father in New York, and though they had both discarded all law in their attempts to gain a fabled treasure, it seemed to him that the punishment had been almost too swift and too severe.

"Well, they will trouble us no more," Jimmie observed. "They didn't last long out here, did they?" he added. "I guess they wasn't familiar with the roles they were playing."

"No; they were not naturally outlaws," Jack said. "Their better natures were warped by the thought of easily-acquired wealth. I'm sorry!"

Taking the prisoners with them, the vigilants now proceeded down the slope, over a ridge which taxed the strength of the wounded boy,

and so on into a valley through which a slender thread of water ran.

Frank and Harry arose from blankets spread before a bed of coals as the party approached and stood gazing at Jimmie with astonishment showing in their sleepy faces. Jimmie grinned and made faces at them, and the two dripping boys hovered the fire.

"I guess you ain't the only ones!" he cried.

"How did you get in here?" asked Frank.

"And where is Ned?"

"Ned and Leroy are over here in a valley somewhere," Jimmie replied. "I'm blessed of I know where the bloomin' valley is, but they're in it, all the same—if they're not out lookin' me up."

"So you found Leroy, did you?" asked Harry.

"No; he found us."

"What's he doing here?" Harry went on. "Why has he been trailing us all along and made himself known only now?"

"He's here on business!" Jimmie replied, with a grin. "You wait until you see him. He'll tell you all about it, I reckon."

While the four boys compared notes, each smilingly accusing the other of trying to "make a sneak" on the temple, the vigilants were preparing a breakfast of corn pones,

bacon, eggs, and coffee. It was broad daylight when the meal was disposed of, and then Frank proposed that they go in search of Ned and Leroy.

"I think I know this aviator lad," he said. "Anyway, I know a boy who used to coax policemen off their beats with his flute."

"I wish I owned his aeroplane," Jimmie exclaimed. "Say!" he added, in a moment, "why can't we get him to go on down the river with us, or go anywhere, for that matter? We're out for a vacation, and I'd like to have a go with an airship. He might take us over the South Pacific!"

"I reckon you don't know much about the South Pacific," Frank answered. "I'd like to take a trip in an aeroplane, but I'm afraid I'll have to get back to little old N. Y. when this excursion is over. You and Ned might go."

"I couldn't go," Harry observed regretfully. Jack shook his head and looked troubled.

"I'll have to go home, too," he said.

"Oh, well," said Jimmie, "we don't know as anyone can go. Leroy may have too much business on his hands to take any of us. But if he can go on a tour, you bet that Ned and I will be in with it!"

"Have you talked with Leroy about it?" asked Frank.

"Aw, quit!" cried the little fellow. "What's the use of wakin' me up, if it is a dream? Mebbe he'll go!"

"I suppose three can ride the machine, all right?" asked Jack.

"Sure; we rode down in it."

"And carry plenty of gasoline?" Harry put in.

"Yes, and provisions," Jimmie replied. "It is a peach of a machine, and Leroy is going to get money for the model from the little old U. S. A. The engines are almost noiseless, and the paint renders it nearly invisible when a mile high."

"There she is now!" Frank exclaimed. "Judge for yourself."

The *Nelson* was indeed making her way over the rough country in the direction of Alameda. There seemed to be three persons on board of her, which Jimmie could not at all understand, as Ned was the only one left with the aviator.

Instead of dropping down at Alameda, however, the aeroplane struck out toward the east at a great rate of speed. In five minutes she was just a speck on the sky, and in a minute more was entirely out of sight, flying low when last seen.

"That's another mystery!" Jack exclaimed.
"Who is in there with him?"

"I'll tell you," Jimmie replied. "Leroy came in here looking for his brother, who has been hiding here. That is a long story, so I'll not stop to tell it here. But it looks like he found him, and the man with him, and is now taking him to Spokane on the way back to New York."

"Then he's left us here to look out for ourselves?"

"I reckon we can do that, all right, all right," Jimmie laughed. "We did it before he came to us, didn't we? Besides, I guess he hasn't done anything of the kind. I'll bet you a cookie he'll come back after Ned."

CHAPTER XVII.

RIPE FOR ADVENTURES IN THE AIR.

Ned and Leroy passed a very unpleasant half hour following the departure of Jimmie. They were setting out in search of him when a faint glow of light at the verge of the valley to the west attracted their attention. The illumination seemed to come through some half opaque material, for it was dim and steady.

When the boys came to the vicinity of the light they found themselves at the opening of a rocky canyon, an entrance overgrown with tall grass and bushes, for water no longer swept down the cut, and the earth where deposited by former floods was fertile. Beyond the thicket was the illumination.

At first they could not make out what kind of a structure the lights shone from, or whether they were houses at all, but, on drawing closer, they saw that they shone forth from a window of a stone structure which nearly blocked the canyon. The sash they saw was glazed, and the glass seemed to be tinted, like the stained glass used in the windows of cathedrals.

"Here's your ruined temple—inhabited!" Leroy laughed.

"It surely is something," Ned admitted. "It is a wonder you did not find it on your previous trip to the place."

"Never came into this valley before," Leroy replied, "and, besides, if I had I could not have seen that contraption from my machine. See how the walls of the canyon hover over it; see how the thicket guards the front. It must be a very old structure, for it was evidently built when the canyon was flooded at certain seasons—see the channel, dry now, and filled with grass and weeds, which runs under it."

"I suppose you have an idea who you will find in there?" asked Ned.

"I know whom I hope to find."

The boys approached the window and listened. There came the sound of voices from the interior, speaking in English. They advanced to the window, made their way around an angle of the house, and felt along for an entrance. It was a large building, for they walked at least a hundred feet, close to the canyon wall, always with their fingers on an unbroken surface of stone wall.

At last they reached the rear, where a door stood ajar. Looking in, Leroy saw his brother sitting at a table with his friend, evidently just beginning his evening meal. With a shout of pleasure he stepped into the great room, closely

followed by Ned. There is little need of saying here what brother said to brother at that meeting. There is little need of following the boys as, astounded and impressed, they wandered through the great stone building which had been the home of Richard Leroy and his devoted friend for so long.

It was, to shorten the description, a wonderful structure of stone, with great chambers and wide, comfortable hearths. There were few entrances, and only one great window on each side, two of these very high up, giving on the walls of the canyon and admitting fresh air but little light. The floors were of stone, and a great vault at one corner of the large chamber where the men had been found disclosed an iron frame and a comparatively modern lock.

"I guess we've found the hidden temple!" Leroy laughed, as all four sat down to a plentiful supper. "But, all the same, no East Indian ever built this. No old priest ever hid his gold in its vaults—for there are no vaults!"

"I don't know what you are talking about," Richard Leroy said. "This building was put up in the early years of the struggle between the Hudson Bay Company and the Montreal rival of that great monopoly. The Hudson Bay Company had a lease of the country which is now British Columbia, and built a fort at the

junction of the Okanogan and Columbia rivers. The Montreal people, it is said, built this storehouse. While the Hudson Bay people held the country for years, the French company managed to get a good trade in furs here. When the two corporations consolidated, this old structure was deserted and, apparently, forgotten. It occupies so sequestered a nook in the mountains that few know that it exists."

"And yet," Ned suggested, "it must have been seen by some one, years ago, who tied the Akbar legend to it. Without the building, the fable of buried gold might never have been invented. You see," he laughed, "some one tried to account for the existence of this building by a great stretch of the imagination, hence the connection of the two—the account of Akbar's immigration and the structure."

It may well be imagined that the brothers sat late that night, recounting their experiences and adventures. Now and then they visited the machine to see that all was well there, and more than once close search of the valley was made for the missing boy. In the early morning Leroy took his brother and his chum into the car and started for Spokane—from which city they were to journey to New York—promising to return that same afternoon and

join Ned and his friends in an exploration of the lower Columbia.

Before Leroy's return, however, Ned saw his four friends, accompanied by Lewis, clambering over a summit which shut his valley in from the south. Wondering if they would be able to discover the ruined storehouse which had so long posed as the ruined temple, Ned secreted himself there and remained quiet. Just as Ned had expected, the walls of the structure were so well hidden in the canyon that the boys passed within a few yards of it without being aware of its existence.

When Ned called them back and exhibited "the hidden temple" with a laughing face, there was unlimited hilarity in the party, Jack Bosworth being the only one to look a bit disappointed. He had honestly believed in the tale written down in the book, and was, as well, not a little nettled that what stood for the temple had been discovered by Ned, after all.

Jimmie laughingly suggested that they search the subterranean vaults for gold, but, as there were no vaults received only jeers for his proposal.

In the afternoon Leroy came back with his aeroplane and carried the boys out to the Columbia river and the motor boats. The vigilants came in later with their prisoners, who

were, later on, given long terms in the penitentiary for murder. As Saxby, the member of the attacking party who was not on trial, could not dispute the claims set up by the defendants that he had fired the fatal shot, the prisoners could not be convicted of first degree murder.

The next morning Ned and his friends, glad to feel the *Black Bear* under their feet again, were off on their way to the Pacific. Leroy followed along in his aeroplane, usually with Jimmie as a guest, and many a night the two parties passed around cheerful campfires. It was a long trip down the Columbia, and a thrilling one, for the lads took their time and enjoyed every minute of it.

They ran rapids, passed around falls, swept past ranches and little towns on the "benches," saw thrifty orchards and grain fields, inspected great blocks of timber which will one day give place to agricultural products, and finally came to the close of their delicious outing.

During the run, of course, the subject of an extended trip in the *Nelson* had been discussed, and Leroy had promised to take Ned and Jimmie with him on a trip to some summer land where the experiences would be new and exciting. When Jack, Frank and Harry turned their faces regretfully to the east, Ned, Jimmie

and the aviator saw them depart with real regret.

The *Black Bear* and the *Wolf* were taken apart and stored away in a Portland warehouse, for Ned did not know when they might want to use them again. An effort had been made to have Harry take the boats home with him, but this he declined to do, saying that some day he would use them again on the Pacific coast.

Then, one night when the three boys sat in a hotel parlor, studying over the maps of the North, preparatory to setting out in the *Nelson* for adventures beyond the Arctic Circle, a stranger of most dignified appearance asked for a short talk with Ned in private. It was midnight before Ned joined his friends again. Then he was in the best of spirits and the light of adventure was in his eyes.

"Boys," he said, with a smile, "I've got a commission for the *Nelson*!"

Jimmie swung his cap in the air and began to dance about the room, though he had, a few minutes before, pleaded guilty to being sleepy.

"What is it?" Leroy asked. "Something good, I hope."

"Well," Ned replied, "there's trouble down in South America—a revolution, or something

like that, and Uncle Sam wants to know something about the situation down——”

“Hurrah!” yelled Jimmie.

“Wants to know something about the situation down there,” Ned went on, “and so we’re going down there to see if we can’t avert a war by discovering the whereabouts of an American millionaire who is said to be illegally held in captivity there.”

“We’ll get him!” cried the little fellow.

“When do we start?” asked Leroy.

“Just as soon as we can get ready.”

“Say at daylight!” laughed the other, and at daylight, after a strenuous night’s work, the *Nelson* lifted in the morning air, her great planes shining in the sunlight, and struck out for the continent of South America.

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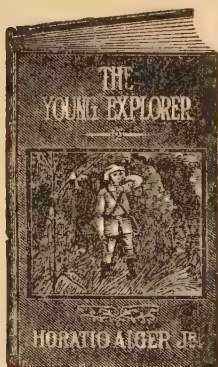
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